

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

A MAD CAP SCHEME; OR, THE BOY TREASURE HUNTERS OF COCOS ISLAND.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The two boys were taken completely by surprise. Two of the savages seized Joe by the arms, while the others threw Seymour to the ground and held him there in spite of the desperate efforts he made to free himself.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A MADCAP SCHEME;

OR,

The Boy Treasure Hunters of Cocos Island.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN WITH THE DESPERATE EYES.

Some time ago a sensational story appeared in the Sunday edition of a big New York City daily concerning an immense piratical treasure alleged to have been buried during the early part of the nineteenth century, on Cocos Island, a wild, rocky, uninhabited point of land rising out of the Pacific Ocean about 500 miles southwest of Panama.

That the little island in question had been for nearly a century the secret storage place for the booty of the most successful pirates that ever harassed the seas, and who had been captured and hanged and exiled without revealing the exact spot where the treasure lay hidden is quite true.

That treasure-hunting expeditions have from time to time during the last fifty years visited Cocos Island and searched persistently but unsuccessfully for the pirates' secret hoard, even to the extent of using dynamite for blasting the rocks at different spots, is also true.

But that the latest expedition, carried to the island by the British auxiliary schooner-yacht *Ros Marine*, actually recovered the treasure, as set forth in the newspaper in question, may well be doubted in the face of the following remarkable narrative which came to the attention of the

writer of these stories last summer, and enables him to set before the many thousand readers of the "Fame and Fortune Weekly" the true story of the discovery of the Cocos Island treasure by three bright California boys, two of whom have since become prominent lawyers in the city of San Francisco.

"Say, boy!"

It was not a pleasant voice—a cross between the snarl of a vicious dog and the growl of a wild beast; neither was it a pleasant face that, framed in by green leaves, projected itself over the neighboring hedge.

These two repugnant facts impressed themselves with unpleasant suddenness upon the attention of Seymour Atwood, a stalwart, handsome boy of sixteen years, who was slowly sauntering homeward along the edge of Oakland Creek with the result of the afternoon's angling swinging carelessly from his right hand.

Seymour lived with his mother, a widow in moderate circumstances, in a neat cottage on a shady street of Alameda.

His father, Captain George Atwood, master of the clipper ship *Morning Star*, had been lost at sea two years before, at least that was the conclusion of the owners, finally reluctantly accepted by Mrs. Atwood, for the vessel, after having been spoken in mid-Pacific, homeward bound,

failed, in the natural order of events, to arrive at her port of destination—San Francisco, and was never afterward heard from.

The voice, and the baleful glare of a pair of ferocious eyes, brought Seymour to a stop.

There was a shifting, desperate look in those eyes, too, as if their owner was in perpetual fear of something coming upon him unaware from behind.

The boy also noticed the thin, bloodless lips drawn back, with a famished, hyena-like snarl; the coarse, sallow cheeks, with a week's growth of beard, and almost smothered in dirt.

In a word, a face typical of low cunning and crime.

Brief as was Seymour's scrutiny, the man seemed to writhe under it.

"Blast yer impertinence!" he growled, surlily.

"What do you want?" asked Atwood, looking him squarely in the face, for it was a lonesome spot, and the boy did not want the fellow to think he was afraid of him.

"You're a cool one," he replied, with a smothered oath, thrusting his closely cropped head still further through the hedge and exposing a thick, sunburned neck. "I've a question I want ter ask yer when yer git good and ready ter answer it," with hideous sarcasm, for the lad's steady gaze evidently disconcerted him.

Seymour made no reply, but he secretly hoped he would be able to answer the query, whatever it was, satisfactorily, so as to be rid of the rascal.

"It'll be well for yer ter tell the truth," the fellow continued, with a menacing nod of the head. "I ain't in no humor for foolin', I kin tell yer. I s'pose yer ain't seen a man—a short man, d'ye mind, with reddish face and mild-like eyes and hair cropped close, like mine?" the speaker grinned horribly. "He was wounded in the side and kind of played out. Yer ain't seen no sich man hereabouts, have yer?"

Those awful eyes transfixed Atwood with suspicious malevolence.

"No," he replied. "I haven't seen such a person."

"Yer tellin' the truth, are yer? No lies, d'ye mind, or 'twill be the wuss for yer."

"I didn't see the man," answered Seymour, positively.

"Been fishin' down at the creek some time, haven't yer?"

"Yes."

"He might have been around and yer wouldn't have seen him, eh?"

"Yes," replied the boy again.

"Confound him!" the fellow muttered between his teeth.

Then he suddenly bent forward, in a listening attitude, his gaze fastened upon the expanse of marsh that lay between the tracks of the narrow-gauge railroad and the creek.

It was a dreary locality.

The monotony of the landscape was only broken by a miserable little tenantless hovel or two, and a few old, deserted mudcows falling apart on the sands.

An ugly place to be caught in the clammy embrace of the white, steaming fog that frequently, late in the after-

noon, blew across the Bay of San Francisco and finally squatted, an opaque mass, over this vicinity.

Suddenly the rascal turned his eyes upon Seymour with a suspicious glare.

"Yer sure yer didn't meet him, eh? And he didn't tell yer what ter say ef yer met me? Yer sure of thet, are yer?"

"Yes," replied the boy for the third time, earnestly, anxious to conciliate the ruffian.

"Say, may fate strike yer dead ef yer lyin'."

"No, I won't," objected Seymour, resolutely. "I didn't see the man, and that's all there is to it."

An angry howl came from the fellow's lips, and he made a movement as if he meant to clear the hedge.

Seymour stepped back, apprehensively, for he certainly dreaded a personal encounter with the rascal.

His fear, however, was groundless, for the man reconsidered his purpose.

"Ef yer haven't seen him," he growled, "I s'pose yer haven't."

Then he screwed his neck about and seemed to be listening again.

While Seymour was considering the advisability of taking advantage of this opportunity to make off, the fellow turned to him again.

"Boy, ef any one asks yer ef yer've seen me—me, d'ye mind—yer to say yer haven't. Ef yer so much as whisper 'bout me bein' round here I'll have yer life!"

Those desperate eyes shot out a look of intense meaning that turned the boy's blood cold.

"I'd foller yer till I got yer, and then I'd kill yer as quick as I would a pig, and a deal sight quicker, d'ye understand?"

With a parting scowl the evil-looking face vanished noiselessly, and not even the snap of a twig told in which direction the man had gone.

Seymour drew a long breath of relief, and keeping as far away from the hedge as he could, continued on his way home.

"Gee whiz!" he breathed, as he walked along. "If that fellow isn't a gallows bird, I'm out in my reckoning. Why, he looks like the picture of Bill Sikes in my copy of *Oliver Twist* at home. He gave me the cold shivers. I wonder if the man he inquired about is anything like him? If he is I don't want to meet him. It looks like there was bad blood between them. When they meet there's likely to be something doing. Well, it's nothing to me. The chances are I'll not see the other chap, and as to that fellow, I guess I've seen the last of him, too."

That was a comforting reflection, and he began to whistle as he trudged along.

He little dreamed under what circumstances he would meet that villain again.

CHAPTER II.

CONVICT 99.

Pushing his way through the grass for some distance, he finally crossed the railroad track, clambered over the strag-

gling fence, and entered a wooded ravine, which intersected the meadows.

He followed the course of a small stream, which had its outlet in the marsh.

The long summer's drought had shrivelled it up to a mere thread of water that mocked the thirst of such cattle as strayed hither.

In the spring, when the rivulet was full and ran musically over the pebbles, Seymour and his particular friend, Joe Morris, often lingered here to scoop up a canful of minnows for bait, and to their mind the grass elsewhere never looked so green, nor the shade so inviting; but now, as Seymour crossed the watercourse, the bits of lichen clinging to the stones looked brown and hard and lifeless, and the whole appearance of the spot was particularly shabby.

The ravine terminated in a little dell, where the trees and shrubbery grew unusually dense.

Here the boy came unexpectedly upon a strange figure, half crouching, half sitting upon the rotten remnant of a tree.

The face of the forlorn-looking object was buried in the palms of his hands, his elbows resting on his thighs.

Seymour's footsteps, deadened by the turf, did not arouse him.

His closely cropped head and bronzed neck recalled to Atwood's mind the rascal he had encountered a mile back on the edge of the marsh.

The boy, as he came to an abrupt pause, uncertain whether to go on or back-out and take a roundabout course across the fields to the county road, noticed that he was clad in a shabby, brown coat and trousers to match.

The idea immediately struck Seymour, as he looked at the silent figure who, for all the movement he made, might have been dead, that this was the man that the ruffian with the terrible eyes was in search of.

Certainly he matched the description fairly well.

It is a singular thing how important events hinge upon mere trifles.

As Seymour decided to give the motionless man a wide berth, lest he disturb him, the cord holding his string of fish snapped and several pounds of the finny tribe struck the ground with a heavy thud.

The sound produced a startling transformation in the man.

With a cry, that seemed scarcely human, he sprang to his feet.

"Back, Joe Bristol! Back, or I'll brain you!" he screamed, his eyes taking in every nook and corner of the dell, as if he expected to find it peopled with enemies.

His attitude was now that of desperate defence, and the last rays of the setting sun, sifting through the leaves, glinted upon a steel rod that he had snatched from its hiding place on the impulse of the moment.

His unbuttoned coat revealed the prison stripes, and on his left breast were the black figures "99."

Seymour was too startled to make a move, and for a moment the two faced each other in silence.

The despairing defiance in the man's eyes, his utter

wretchedness, and the blotches on his hands and clothes that looked like dried blood, instead of repelling the boy struck a sympathetic chord in his nature.

He could not tell why, but he felt sorry for him, and did not feel that sense of fear that the ruffian down by the marsh had inspired in him.

"You need not fear me," he blurted out.

"Back, boy, on your life!" exclaimed the convict, for such the stripes proclaimed him to be, believing that Seymour's words veiled some artifice to catch him off his guard. "Have you been sent to spy me out? Has that scoundrel employed you to help run me down?"

"No one has employed me to run you down."

"No one?" almost incredulously.

"No one—I am alone."

"You are—alone?"

The last word died away in a hoarse whisper and a change came over his face.

The steel bar slipped from his nerveless grasp, and he seemed to shrivel up and collapse before the boy's eyes.

"Heaven help me! Heaven help me!" he moaned, dropping down on the rotten tree trunk. "I'm done for—at last."

"You seem to be in a bad way," ventured Seymour, with a feeling of pity for the man, criminal though he was.

The convict made no answer, only glared wildly at the lad.

"Can I do anything to help you?" asked Seymour.

"Help—me?" was the hoarse response. "Who would held such a miserable object as I—an escaped felon. You are making sport of me, boy."

"I am not, on my word of honor," replied the boy, with a manly look.

The convict looked at him earnestly, and then said:

"I believe you, my lad. Forgive me for doubting you, but when a man gets to that pass that he shies at his own shadow, perhaps you'll understand——"

He stopped, pressed his hand to his side and groaned, wearily.

Seymour saw that he was in a fainting condition, and he ran back to the stream and brought some water in the top of his soft hat.

The man drank the water eagerly and appeared somewhat revived.

"Thank you, lad," he said, gratefully. "Will you help me over to that tree. I must lean against something, for I'm dreadfully weak."

Seymour was glad to do anything that would make him feel easier, and soon had him propped up as comfortably as circumstances permitted.

"I'm afraid you are hurt," he said. "There's blood on your clothes."

"Hurt! Yes, and badly, too. I was stabbed by the scoundrel who planned our escape from San Quentin. I was foolish enough to tell him a secret I possess, and he turned upon me at the first chance. I then understood why he had helped me to get away from prison. His purpose was a murderous one. He wanted to possess alone the golden

key to the fabulous wealth of Cocos Island. But I have foiled him. I have hidden the paper where his eyes will never find it."

The chuckle of satisfaction was succeeded by a spasm of pain.

Seymour saw that he was exhausting his strength and begged him to rest.

He smiled, drearily, closed his eyes and remained silent for some minutes.

The sun had now gone down, and the gloom of evening was closing in upon the landscape.

The boy even fancied he could scent on the air the coming fog which was at that moment rolling across the bay.

Seymour wondered what he could do for this poor wounded wreck of humanity, hunted alike by a treacherous comrade and by his natural enemy, the law.

And while he was thinking the convict spoke again.

"Boy," he said, with a visible effort, "I know not why you interest yourself in such a wretch as I. Surely you have a kind heart. If you knew how little I deserve your sympathy you would turn from me with loathing and contempt."

"How do you know I would?" asked Seymour, sympathetically.

"Because it would be right that you should," with a weary sigh. "Well, I deserve my fate. The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they fetch you in the end."

"But if you are truly sorry for the evil you have committed God will give you the chance to square yourself," answered the boy, earnestly.

"Too late. It is too late, my lad. I shall never see another sunrise—never."

The note of prophecy was in the man's voice, and Seymour was greatly shocked.

It began to dawn upon him that this unfortunate outcast was, with each fleeting breath, slowly but surely drifting out upon the trackless sea of eternity.

Not until that moment had he suspected the awful change that was upon the man.

"It is hard to die like this," moaned the convict, despairingly. "A hunted man, with the garb of shame upon my body. But I have brought it on myself."

"To me you seem more unfortunate than wicked," said Seymour, soothingly. "You are not the least bit like the ruffian I met down near the marsh a short time ago."

"What!" almost shouted the dying man, grasping the boy by the arm. "You saw him! Close by, you say, and not an hour since? Great heavens! I thought I had thrown him off the scent. No sleuth-hound is keener than he. He will find me—dead, maybe—but he will find me, unless he is first taken by the officers, and he is too cunning a scoundrel to be easily trapped. But I will foil him, after all," he said, tearing at his coat with a feverish eagerness which surprised Atwood. "Boy, heaven must have sent you to me for a good purpose."

He now held in his fingers a folded sheet of soiled note-paper.

"This," he said, in great agitation, "has cost me my

life. The diagram and words it contains will guide you to the prize that villain covets. Hide it quickly. There are eyes somewhere close by," the speaker rolled his eyes fearfully around, "that must never rest upon it or learn that you possess it, for the evil soul that shines from them would contrive a way to tear it from your grasp at any cost, however desperate. They are the eyes of the man you saw near the marsh."

The words of the dying man had gradually fined down to a hoarse whisper, but their meaning was so intense that Seymour shivered in spite of himself.

As the convict lay back, gasping for breath, the shadows of night were closing in about the dell.

The western sky still held a faint glow, but it was fading out each moment just as this man's life was ebbing away.

As the minutes slipped by the silence was only broken by the convict's labored breathing and the distant croak of the frogs.

Suddenly Seymour heard the unmistakable rustle made by branches when pushed aside to permit the passage of a moving object.

He knew it was not caused by the wind, for only the faintest kind of a breeze was stirring.

Although some little distance off, the sound was slowly moving up the ravine toward the dell, and it gave Seymour a queer sensation.

He had never believed himself to be a coward, even in the dark, but now a creepy feeling of terror seemed to benumb his faculties.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a relief to him to have had a human being come upon the scene, but there was one abroad in the neighborhood that night whom the boy wouldn't have met for worlds—the man with the terrible eyes.

Nearer and nearer came the sound until it was seemingly close at hand, and then it suddenly ceased.

It was bad enough to hear this thing, whatever it was, approaching, but Seymour found the silence which succeeded a hundred fold more unendurable.

His overcharged nerves were all of a tingle.

Every point of the foliage round about seemed to hide a pair of awful eyes that the boy fancied were glaring at them.

The suspense was something terrible

He held his breath and dared not move a finger.

Why had the thing stopped, and what was it doing now?

Seymour strained his ears for some sign of its presence, but not a twig stirred.

To add to the boy's terror, the dying man moved uneasily about and talking incoherently.

It was so dark now that Seymour could no longer distinguish the convict's features.

"Boy, are you here?" he whispered, groping around feebly with one hand until he caught Atwood's arm. "I cannot see you. It is cold—very cold."

After a moment's silence he continued.

"I—I gave you a paper—a little while ago, didn't I?"

"Yes," answered Seymour, with his voice to the man's ear.

"Guard it well and—follow the directions. I feel I am—going fast. Can you pray? Ask every one to—forgive—"

A shudder passed over his body and there was a rattle in his throat.

At that awful moment the mysterious sound came again, no longer a cautious approach, but a quick rush, like some wild animal forcing its way through the brush.

Seymour sprang to his feet.

Even in his panic he realized one thing clearly.

It was all over with his companion—Convict 99 was dead.

Then something burst into the dell upon him, and the boy took to his heels, like a frightened hare, scarcely knowing in what direction he went.

CHAPTER III.

CONCERNING THE TREASURE BURIED ON COCOS ISLAND.

Seymour was not pursued, but his excited fancy led him to imagine that the companion of Convict 99 was hard upon his heels.

Scrambling over a fence that barred his way he stumbled across the freshly turned sods of a ploughed field, finally coming to the fence which bordered the county road.

Quite exhausted, he paused to recover his breath, with a fearful glance over his shoulder into the pasture through which he had just passed.

The bright starlight night would have revealed his pursuer had he been followed, but the enemy was not in sight.

"Thank goodness, I've got away from him!" thought the boy, with a feeling of infinite relief. "I hope I shan't find him lying in wait for me down the road," with a shudder. "I never knew before what it is to be afraid of any one, but I wouldn't encounter that ruffian on this lonesome road to-night for a gold mine."

Just then he heard the sound of wheels and the regular thuds of a horse's hoofs coming toward him.

Almost immediately a horse and buggy loomed dimly into sight around a turn in the road.

"Here's luck!" breathed Seymour. "I'll get a lift to town."

As the vehicle, driven by a solitary occupant, came near, Atwood rushed forward.

"Whoa!" cried a boyish voice, pulling in his animal. "Who are you and what do you want?"

"Is that you, Joe?" exclaimed Atwood, in a joyful tone.

"Good gracious! What are you doing out here at this time of night, Seymour? Jump in."

The invitation was superfluous, for Seymour was half in the buggy at the time.

"Get up!" cried Joe Morris, to the easy-going animal, and off the rig started along the road.

"Make her go faster, Joe," said Atwood, nervously.

"Faster! Are you in a hurry to reach town?"

"I want to get away from this locality just as soon as I can."

"Why, what ails you, old chap?" asked his companion, in some surprise. "You look and act as if you'd just seen a spook."

"I've been up against something worse than that," replied Seymour, soberly.

"You have! Let's hear about it," curiously.

"I'll tell you to-morrow, Joe. I don't feel equal to it just now."

"You went fishing down the creek this afternoon, didn't you?"

"You know I did. I wanted you to go along, but you had to go over near the bay with a message to your uncle."

"That's right, and I'm just getting back now. I stayed to supper, that's why I'm so late. Well, you went fishing—now where's your catch?"

Seymour hadn't thought of his string of fish since the moment the line snapped and they dropped on the earth in the dell.

"My fish!" he replied. "Why, I forgot all about them."

"Forgot about them!" cried Joe, much astonished.

"I left them in the dell at the head of the ravine."

"What did you do that for?"

"Don't ask me, Joe. Something happened that took my attention off the fish altogether."

"Something happened, eh? Say, old man, can't you tell a fellow what happened to you? I'm dead curious to know. I never knew you to act like this before."

They had reached the more settled part of Alameda now and Seymour felt easier in his mind.

"Well, Joe, I've had a pretty fierce adventure."

"I should think you had by the way you go on. Been up against a tramp?"

"Worse than that, Joe."

"Not a mad dog, or something of that kind?"

Seymour shook his head.

"I met the two convicts who escaped from San Quentin last week."

"You didn't!" gasped Joe, in amazement.

"I did. One of them I met down on the edge of the marsh near the railroad, and he was a murderous ruffian if there ever was one. The other I ran across in the dell, and he was——"

"Worse than the other, I suppose," chipped in Joe, eagerly.

"No, he wasn't. I wasn't afraid of him at all."

"Oh, you wasn't," grinned Joe. "You're going to notify the police right away that those chaps are in the neighborhood, aren't you?"

"Yes. You might drive on to the station."

"I'll do it. There's a reward for information leading to their capture, you know, and you stand a pretty fair show of gathering it in."

"I'd give up every cent of the reward to see the villain I met near the marsh under lock and key."

"You would! Why?"

"For reasons," replied Seymour.

"Ho! And what about the other?"

"Oh, he won't trouble anybody any more."

"Why not?"

"Because he's dead."

"Dead! You don't say!"

"He died from a stab wound inflicted by the other fellow."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he told me so."

"Then you were talking to him?" said Joe, evidently astonished.

"I was. I was with him till he died."

"Caesar's ghost! You don't say so. When did he die?"

"About five minutes before I met you."

Joe Morris whistled and looked hard at his companion.

"Where did he croak? Not beside the road?"

"No. In the dell."

"No wonder you look all broke up. How came you to stay with him till he died?" wonderingly.

"I had reasons."

"Aren't you going to tell me?"

"I'll tell you the whole story to-morrow."

"Why not now?"

"I don't feel in the mood of going over it to-night."

"Say, if you don't tell me I'll be awake half the night, wondering what sort of an adventure you had."

"Don't talk foolish, Joe. I'll come over to your house in the morning and relieve your curiosity."

As they were now within a few doors of the station-house, Joe made no further remark, and Seymour presently alighted, and, followed by his companion, who wanted to hear all that passed between his chum and the police, entered the station.

Seymour gave his information to an officer on duty and wasted very few words on the subject.

Then Joe drove him up to the gate of the Atwood cottage, and left him, after exacting a promise from his friend that he would surely be over early at his house on the following morning.

Seymour found his mother worrying over his prolonged absence.

"What kept you so late, my son? I've been keeping your supper warm these two hours."

"Well, mother, I've had quite an adventure on my way home from the creek, that's why I've been so long getting back."

As soon as she put his supper on the table, he told her, between bites, what he had been through.

But not to alarm her he made it as easy as he could.

She thought it serious enough even at that.

"Have you informed the police?" she asked.

"Yes, mother. It's up to them now. I only hope they catch the surviving convict. He's altogether too desperate a villain to be allowed to remain at large."

Seymour soon retired to his room, and the first thing he did when he got there was to fish the piece of paper from

his pocket which Convict 99 had given him with the earnest injunction to guard well from prying eyes.

The boy was burning with curiosity to learn the contents of the paper, which had cost its owner his life to preserve.

"It must be very valuable," he thought, as he carefully unfolded it out upon his writing table.

There was a rough sketch of the interior of a vessel's bows, with an arrow pointing directly at the heel of the bowsprit.

Underneath, written by a lead pencil, was the following:

"Sch. Santa Cruz—bay 1 mile S. Oakland cr.—chart of Cocos Island hidden in heel of bowsprit—gives exact clew to treasure buried on island by Thomas Smith, mate of brig Tornado, pirate, Captain Champlain, 1820.

"This treasure, which I have seen with my own eyes, consists of silver and gold coin, silver bars and gold wedges held together by leather thongs, church ornaments, including a large ostensorium, studded with precious stones, the rays of the sun image being alternately of gold and silver. There is also a stout chest, studded with iron bolt heads, supposed to be filled with money and jewels. I place the value of this treasure, exclusive of unknown contents of chest, at half a million dollars. Believe there is a million or more in chest. Several attempts have been made to find this treasure, all of which have failed. I received chart from one, Yates, who said he got it from Smith himself. I arranged with a wealthy Mexican, of Panama, to fit out an expedition to recover this hidden hoard. We sailed for island in due course, but schooner went ashore on rocks of Chatham Bay at night in heavy gale. All lost but myself. I had no difficulty in locating the cave where treasure lies hidden, but had no way of removing it from island. Was taken off by brig Starfish, three months later, and landed in San Francisco. My evil star brought me in contact with a scoundrel named Joe Bristol, who had been a beachcomber in the South Pacific, and like many of these was an escaped Australian convict. He planned a burglary of a Rincón Hill residence, in which he induced me to join. We were caught with the goods, convicted and sent to San Quentin for ten years. We served less than a year. In a burst of confidence I told him of the Cocos Island treasure and how I alone held the key to its hiding place, and had concealed the chart under the flooring of the room we had occupied in Pacific Street. From that hour he devoted all his energies to effecting our escape from the prison, and one dark, foggy night a week ago, we got away by a device which only a desperate man would have undertaken. We reached the city in safety, and I succeeded in recovering the chart. From that hour Bristol never lost sight of me, and I never drew a free breath, for I had fathomed his purpose, which was to rob me of the chart. We lay hidden till yesterday in a house in Murderers' Alley, and I slept with one eye open, and only when the place was full of company. Last night the police got scent of us and we were obliged to fly the city, coming to the marsh near Alameda. Here Bristol made an attempt to get the chart from me, and when I resisted stabbed me in the side. I fled in the darkness, eluded his pursuit, and took refuge on the sunken

schooner Santa Cruz on the bay shore, near Oakland creek, where I had the chart, and am writing these words for the benefit of whoever shall find my body, for I feel I have received my death wound. I dare not stay even here lest that scoundrel find me and discover this paper. I know a spot where I think I will be secure even from him. May God have mercy on me, since every other hand is raised against me.

PETER MARLE."

CHAPTER IV.

STARTING FOR THE WRECK OF THE SANTA CRUZ.

To say that Seymour was astonished at the contents of the paper, which was written in a close, cramped hand, and took him some time to decipher, would be stating the case very mildly.

He read it over twice to make sure he had mastered every word of the singular communication.

It had a special significance for him, for he remembered reading a story in the Chronicle a year before of an expedition fitted out in San Francisco to search for the alleged treasure of Cocos Island, which had returned after an unsuccessful quest.

He had also heard his father speak more than once about this piratical treasure trove, and in terms which showed that he had believed in its existence.

"By George!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Can it really be true that this Peter Marle, Convict 99, actually saw the treasure with his own eyes, as he avers in this paper? It must be so, for these are his dying words, one might say. And the chart which he says he hid somewhere in the heel of the bowsprit of that old wreck on the edge of the bay, the schooner Santa Cruz, which Joe and I explored this spring, contains the clew that no one has been able to light upon these last fifty years. Joe and I must get that chart to-morrow morning, if it really exists, as I cannot doubt but it does. And then? Good gracious! Think of a million dollars' worth of treasure at our beck and call. It seems too good to be true. I'm afraid I shan't sleep a wink to-night. That chart is like the 'open sesame' to the robbers' cave in the 'Forty Thieves.' Lor, when I read that story how I did envy Ali Baba! He had a regular cinch, and if there really is something definite in that Cocos Island chart, I'll have another. That is, providing, of course, I can realize on my information. Come to think of it, I don't know where this Cocos Island is, except that I believe it's somewhere off the coast of Columbia in the Pacific. I wonder if my encyclopaedia throws any light on it?"

He went to his bookcase and brought out the volume dealing with the letter C.

"Let me see," he muttered, turning over the pages till he reached Coc. "'Cocos, a genus of trees distinguished by——' That isn't it. 'Cocos Islands, two small islands near the west coast of Sumatra, discovered by Keeling in 1609,' That certainly isn't the—ah, here it is! 'Cocos

Island, about 480 miles southwest of Panama. Lat., 5 deg. 33 min. N.; long., 87 deg. W.' That isn't a big amount of information, but it locates the island clear enough, all right. I should judge the island is about 3,000 miles from here."

He got out his atlas, turned to the map of South America, and to his great delight found that Cocos Island was shown by name attached to a small dot at some little distance from the coast of Columbia, and southwest of the Isthmus.

It was some time before Seymour could undress and go to bed.

He read the words written by Peter Marle over once again before he did so.

Then he lay tossing about in bed for a full hour before he finally dropped off to sleep.

Even then his slumber was disturbed by visions of a rocky island in the midst of a vast expanse of water, and a cave filled to overflowing with gold, and silver, and jeweled crucifixes, and diamond-studded goblets, and what not.

The morning sun was shining full in at his window when he awoke next morning.

It was one of those glorious California mornings of which there are so many on the Pacific slope.

The first thing he thought of was the Cocos Island treasure, and the way he tumbled out of bed, washed and dressed himself, one would have fancied he expected to catch an early train for San Jose, or somewhere else.

He had left the sheet of paper containing Peter Marle's writing on the table, and this he now carefully put away in his pocketbook.

Then he went downstairs to breakfast, for he heard his mother calling him.

"I'm going over to see Joe Morris, mother," he said, after he had finished his meal.

As this was a regular occurrence with him, only varied by Joe coming over to see him, his mother offered no objection.

So putting on his hat he was off like a shot.

Joe lived three blocks away, in a somewhat bigger and more pretentious house, for his father, who was cashier in a large wholesale house in San Francisco, was fairly well-to-do.

The two boys, who were in the same class at the high school, had been chums for two years, and were never so happy as when in each other's company.

Their favorite sport was boating and fishing, and they followed this at Oakland Creek and out in the bay.

Joe's uncle, who lived near the bay, owned a catboat, and the boys often borrowed it and went over to Goat Island, or up and down the bay for a considerable distance in either direction.

In fact, it was nothing unusual for them, when the wind was fair and they wanted to make a day of it, to go as far as the Two Brothers Islands off San Pablo Bay.

Once they even sailed over to Fort Point, within full view of the Golden Gate.

When Seymour arrived at his chum's house he found Joe sitting on the front veranda waiting for him.

"Hello, old skeesicks!" grinned Joe. "I see you've kept your word."

"Don't I always keep it, Joe?"

"Well, come to think of it, you do. I believe I do, too, don't I?"

"I guess you do."

"Take a seat, and let's hear all about that wonderful adventure of yours. I see by the morning paper that the police found the body of Peter Marle, otherwise Convict 99, where you told them to search for him. His body was clawed over as if he had been attacked by a wild beast. Know anything about that?"

"He wasn't in that shape when he died," replied Seymour. "But I can imagine what caused it."

"You can, eh? Well, that's more than the police have discovered. They've got your name in the paper, all right," snickered his chum. "But I didn't notice anything about a reward coming your way."

"They haven't captured that other rascal, then?" said Seymour, in a tone of disappointment.

"Not up to the time the paper went to press. They'll get him all right, for State Detective Jackson, and a couple of the prison wardens are hot upon his track. The paper says he's an English crook, who years ago escaped from an Australian prison."

"Yes, and his name is Joe Bristol. Well, are you ready to hear my story?"

"Bet your life I am."

Seymour thereupon laid before his chum all that he had passed through the previous afternoon and evening, from his encounter with Bristol, down near the marsh, to the death of Peter Marle.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Joe, admiringly, "you've got more nerve than I have. I wouldn't have stood by, in the dark, too, and watched that convict die for a farm."

"I felt sorry for the poor fellow, and I think you would have, too, if you'd seen him under the same circumstances. I didn't have the heart to leave him all alone in the gloom of the dell to die like an outcast animal. I don't believe he was really a bad man—he certainly was not in the same class with Bristol. That fellow hasn't any more feeling than a stone. I guess he's got murder down to a fine art. He's responsible for Marle's death, and ought to swing for it."

"I dare say he ought if you say so. But what about that paper the dead man handed you before he passed in his checks? I s'pose you've read it, haven't you?"

"Yes, and now I'm going to let you read it," replied Seymour, taking the paper from his pocketbook and handing it over to his companion.

Joe read it over with unfeigned interest.

"Jumping jewsharps!" he ejaculated. "Do you really believe there's anything in this?"

"Why not?"

"It seems like the wildest kind of a dream that you could come into possession of such a secret as that. A

pirate's treasure-trove! Gold, silver, pieces of eight as they are called in stories of the Spanish Main, jewels, church ornaments, and all the rest, worth a million or more. I leave it to yourself, does it seem reasonable?"

"I admit it doesn't," replied Seymour. "But stranger things have happened to a boy than even that."

"In story books—yes."

"No, out of story books. Don't you know that real solid facts are sometimes stranger than fiction?"

"So they are. But think of such a thing coming right home to you, just an ordinary, every-day boy like myself. I tell you it doesn't seem natural. It sounds like a pipe-dream."

"No matter what it sounds like. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Are you ready to go with me this morning to the wreck of the Santa Cruz and see if we can find that chart of Cocos Island?"

"Am I ready? Bet your whiskers I am. But I don't think you'll find it, just the same."

"That's where we differ, Joe. I believe we will find it, and just where Peter Marle says here that he hid it. What object could he have, in the condition he was in, to write about a lot of stuff that wasn't true?"

"That's just the point," replied Joe, wagging his head, sagely. "It was the condition he was in that led him to do it, maybe. A man with a mortal wound in his side is apt to be off his nut, and I think that accounts for the whole thing. If it isn't a ghost story I shall be mightily surprised."

"Well, you must remember I talked to the man before he died, and I'm ready to swear he had his senses about him."

"Well, I won't argue the matter. What's the use? Let's go down and search the Santa Cruz. If we find the chart in question I'll haul in my horns and admit that, as a second Solomon, I don't amount to shucks."

Joe went into the house and told his mother that he and Seymour Atwood were going off down to the bay together.

Then the two boys started upon their six-mile walk to the scene of the wreck of the schooner Santa Cruz.

CHAPTER V.

SEARCHING FOR THE CHART OF COCOS ISLAND.

They set out at a good, stiff, swinging gait, for they were fine athletic young fellows, enjoying robust health and blessed with buoyant spirits.

In a little over an hour they sighted the waters of San Francisco Bay, and then following the shore line south from the mouth of Oakland Creek they soon caught sight of the remains of the Santa Cruz, her nose or bow, pointing skyward at an angle of forty-five degrees or so, alone showing a few yards above the bed of mud and water in which she lay buried for three-quarters of her length.

The vessel had been driven ashore in a stiff sou'west gale

two years before, and had been allowed to go to pieces in the mud when it was found it wouldn't pay to haul her off.

At low tide she was surrounded by the mud alone, at high tide a foot or two of water laved the base of her exposed prow.

The tide was up when Seymour and Joe reached the vicinity that morning, and the problem of reaching her was solved by a small raft tied to the shore, which some boys had constructed for the purpose, no doubt, of visiting her.

The waters of the bay sparkled in the bright sunshine as if encrusted with myriads of diamonds, and the gentle breeze kissed innumerable little wavelets into life and motion.

"Just the morning for a sail, isn't it?" remarked Joe, enthusiastically, as they stepped upon the raft.

"Not on an old thing like this."

"Of course not. I mean in my uncle's catboat."

"Well, after we find that chart perhaps we'll take a trip about the neighborhood."

They poled out to the wreck, which was only a short distance from shore, mounted her sloping sides, secured the rope attached to the raft by tying it to a ring-bolt and then scrambled up the bit of deck and dropped down into the forecabin through the open hatch.

Hardly had they disappeared when a haggard, disreputable-looking being, who had been following hard upon their heels, unknown to the boys, emerged from the bushes which fringed the road, and after a sharp glance about the vicinity, glided down to the water's edge and glared across the expanse of mud and water which intervened between the shore and the wreck of the Santa Cruz.

If Seymour had seen him he would have recognized the newcomer on the scene as the villainous Joe Bristol, and the sight of his forbidding features wouldn't have made him feel any too good.

But Seymour wasn't thinking of the Australian convict at that moment.

His thoughts were more pleasantly engaged.

He and Joe Morris were balancing themselves about the heel of the schooner's broken bowsprit, and each with a bit of lighted candle in hand was about to search for the precious map of Cocos Island.

"Let's have a glimpse of that writing, will you?" asked Joe. "The arrow points at the exact spot where Marle says he concealed the chart."

Seymour brought the writing forth, and after they both studied it a moment and compared it with the end of the bowsprit, they noticed a broad crack in the latter.

"That's where it is if it's here at all," said Joe, pointing at the crack.

"Well, it's a good place to stow such a thing away in if it isn't large."

"No one would ever think of looking into a narrow slit like that."

"Sure they wouldn't. We never thought of doing such a thing when we were here before."

"Well, less talk and more action," grinned Joe. "I'll

hold my candle over on this side and see what I can see, while you do the same on your side."

"There's something in there all right," was Seymour's exclamation a few moments later.

He drew his jack-knife from his pocket, opened up the big blade and began to poke the crack with it.

"By George! I've got hold of it, and it is a paper of some kind."

"Fish it out, then!" cried Joe, in no little excitement.

"That's what I'm trying to do, old man."

He scraped away for several moments till he got a grip on the end of the thing, when he succeeded in drawing one end out far enough to catch hold of it with his fingers.

Then he carefully drew out of its hiding place a discolored piece of stiff paper in folded form.

The boys put their heads together, while Joe held up his bit of candle, as Seymour unfolded the paper.

"By the great hornspoon!" cried Joe, in ecstasy of delight. "It's the chart. Peter Marle wasn't off his base, after all."

As the words escaped his lips the shadow of a man's head was suddenly thrown upon the little patch of sunshine at their feet.

Joe saw it and looked up at the open hatchway.

The face and shoulders of Joe Bristol, the Australian convict, was framed in the opening, and it was a face the boy wasn't likely to forget very soon.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, with a start, for that terrible pair of eyes was fixed savagely upon him.

"What's the matter?" asked Seymour, astonished at the sudden trepidation displayed by his companion.

"There's a man at the hatch watching us," replied Joe, in unsteady tones.

Seymour turned around and looked.

One glance was sufficient to congeal the blood in his veins.

"Great heavens, Joe!" he whispered, hoarsely. "It's the convict, Bristol!"

The villain, perceiving that he was observed, dragged himself up, drew an ugly-looking knife—the same with which he had stabbed Peter Marle—and thrusting it between his teeth, jumped down into the forecabin and confronted the boys.

"Hand thet chart over, my covies, and be spry about it, or I'll carve yer both into mincemeat."

"The chart is mine," replied Seymour, shoving it into his pocket.

"It's mine!" cried Bristol. "And I mean ter have it, d'ye hear?"

He made a dash at Seymour with the knife, and the boy sprang over the bowsprit to avoid him.

But he need not have done so, for the scoundrel's feet slipped on the sloping deck and he came down flat on the planks, the knife sticking into the wood.

His hand lost its hold on the weapon, which stood out quivering in the sunlight, and his body slid down into the mud and ooze at the lower end of the forecabin.

Joe Morris, with great presence of mind, seized the knife and drew it out of the deck.

"Come!" he cried to Seymour. "Let's skip before that fellow can extricate himself."

His companion was only too glad to follow his lead.

They sprang, in turn, through the hatchway, slid down to the waiting raft, and, seizing the pole, cast off and made for the shore as fast as possible.

Before they reached it they saw the head and shoulders, and finally the body, of the convict rise through the hatchway.

He followed them with his eyes, and shook his fist after them, in impotent fury, but made no attempt to follow by wading through the mud and water, shoreward, which was the way he had gained the wreck.

"Gee whiz! He's a bird," said Joe, with a sickly grin.

"A bird of ill omen," replied Seymour, as they stepped on shore.

"I guess we won't go sailing to-day," put in Joe, as he tied up the raft.

"No. We've got something else—something more important—to engage our attention."

The boys looked back at the wreck of the Santa Cruz.

Bristol, the convict, was no longer in sight.

"Why, where did he go?" asked Joe.

"Back into the forecastle, I guess, to keep out of sight. Come on. I wish we might meet one of the San Quentin officials, we could put him on to his quarry."

Thus speaking, Seymour and his chum started for home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CLEW TO THE COCOS ISLAND TREASURE.

"Look here, Joe," said Seymour. "Do you know it's very singular how that rascal came to be about the wreck of the Santa Cruz."

"Oh, I don't know. I guess he came there to hide."

"I doubt it. The officers are sure to visit it, if they haven't already done so, and are likely to keep their eye on it. It would be more of a trap than a place of refuge for a hunted criminal."

"Those chaps make mistakes sometimes and queer themselves."

"I don't believe that fellow is making any. In my opinion he's about as artful a villain as walks in shoe leather."

"He's a mighty hard case. Look at the way he started for you with that knife. If he hadn't slipped there might have been trouble. It's a nasty-looking weapon," said Joe, pulling the knife out of his pocket and looking at it.

"No doubt that is the knife with which he stabbed Peter Marle."

"I've a great mind to throw it away," replied Joe, with a shudder of disgust.

"Give it to me if you don't care to carry it."

His chum passed it over willingly, glad to be rid of it.

"You ought to turn it over to the police."

"I mean to. Do you know, Joe, I think Bristol followed us to the wreck."

"What makes you think so?" asked Morris, in some surprise.

"I'm afraid he's got me spotted."

"Spotted!"

"Yes. I'm almost certain he knows I met Marle, and was with him when he died."

"What of that?"

"I'm positive it was he who rushed into the dell just as Marle breathed his last. It was so dark, and I was so worked up at the time that I didn't recognize the intruder, but I know that scoundrel was hanging around the place, listening for sounds that would betray the presence either of his companion or the officers who were on their track. When I made a dash and got away he was probably surprised, and to that circumstance I may owe my escape from his clutches. As soon as he searched Marle's body, which, according to the newspaper, he must have done in a savage way, his suspicions were at once aroused by the absence of the coveted chart that he supposed his companion still carried about his person. It must have struck him that Marle, to foil him, had given the paper to the person, whom he probably saw was a boy, who had scurried out of the dell so suddenly. He associated that boy with me, whom he had met down by the marsh, and resolved to discover my whereabouts at any cost, for he was determined to gain possession of the chart, whose value he understood from having been a confidant of Marle in San Quentin. He must have seen us walking along this road on our way to the wreck and shadowed us, on the alert for a chance to take us unawares, and force me to give up the chart if I had it about me."

"What you say sounds reasonable enough," admitted Morris.

"Now you can appreciate the position I am in. He knows beyond a doubt that I have the chart, and I won't be safe as long as he is free and in this neighborhood."

"I wouldn't worry," replied his chum, reassuringly. "He's bound to be caught soon."

"I don't know about that," answered Seymour, soberly.

"Why, there are a dozen officers hunting for him in this vicinity."

"That rascal is no ordinary criminal, and it isn't the first time he has been searched for. Probably when he escaped from the Australian prison, years ago, he was tracked for weeks and weeks in the bush, and the artifices he resorted to in order to throw his pursuers off the scent are still fresh in his mind, and he is using many of them over again. Marle gave me to understand that there wasn't a foxier scoundrel on the face of the earth, and that means a heap. It is hard to match the low cunning some criminals possess, and they are doubly dangerous on that account."

"That's all right," said Joe. "But that fellow must get food in order to exist, and I don't see how he's going to get it without taking such desperate chances that will certainly land him in jail within a few hours."

"Well, I shan't feel easy in my mind till he's caught."

"I don't blame you. I guess we'd better not wander out of town again until we hear he's been captured."

"That's exactly my idea."

After notifying the police that they had seen Joe Bristol, the convict still at large, at the wreck of the Santa Cruz, and giving up the knife, the boys went on to Seymour's house and sought the seclusion of his room in order to examine the chart undisturbed.

Seymour carefully unfolded and smoothed out the creases of the piece of parchment-like paper on which the drawing and various bits of writing had been made, and spread it out upon the smooth surface of his writing-table, pinning down the four corners with flat-headed drawing tacks.

The two boys bent their heads, eagerly, over it.

In the center of the paper was a rude outline sketch of what was evidently intended to represent the shore line of Cocos Island, for the name was written in the middle of the leaf-like drawing, accompanied with the latitude and longitude given as 5 deg. 33 m. N. and 86 deg. 59 m., W.

What the boys took to be a huge, wide promontory projected from the northern end of the outline, the point of the compass being indicated by an arrow, with a capital N at its head.

On either side of this promontory was an indentation, the one on the right or west side being marked Chatham Bay, the one on the east, Wafer Bay.

A circle near Chatham Bay was marked "chimney rock."

Another circle in front, enclosing a cross, was marked "cave."

Around both was written, "trees and dense underbrush."

A line from Chatham Bay, which passed close to the cross mark, was marked, "creek—follow to flat rock."

Underneath diagram were the following directions:

"When afternoon sun throws shadow of Chimney Rock directly across hollow of flat rock, note where point of shadow ends, and with compass measure off 12 F., W. S. W. and face due W., when you will see narrow gap in sheer wall of rock. Measure off 5 F., E. by S., and dig."

That was all.

"Well, what do you think of it, Joe?" asked Seymour, looking at his chum.

"I think it's great!" replied Morris, enthusiastically. "If we were on the island at this moment I think we could find that cave without any trouble."

"Perhaps we could," replied his friend, cautiously.

"Why, with those directions it looks all plain sailing to me!" cried Joe, eagerly.

"I'm afraid you'd find things more complicated on the spot."

"How so?"

"Oh, I can't exactly explain what I mean."

"Well, what are you going to do about it, anyway?"

"About what?"

"About that chart, of course. There's a million dollars' worth of money and other valuables waiting out on Cocos

Island for the person who can find it. You hold the clew. All you've got to do is to go to the island, follow the directions and take possession of the treasure. I wish I had your luck."

Seymour broke into a hearty laugh.

"You tell it well, Joe."

"Sure I do. Isn't it down here in black and white?"

"Yes, it's down here all right. But so far as I'm concerned that treasure might as well be in the moon as in Cocos Island."

"How so?"

"How am I to get to Cocos Island? Tell me that."

Morris looked at his friend and then scratched his head.

"What's the matter with chartering a schooner and sailing there?" he said.

"That costs money, doesn't it, and my whole capital consists of \$100 in an Oakland savings bank."

"You might do as some of the other chap did who went there. Form a company called 'The Cocos Island Exploration and Treasure-Seeking Company. Capital, so much, in shares of \$5 each.' I'd take some, bet your life. With that paper you ought to have no trouble in raising all the cash you would need."

"That isn't a bad idea, Joe. I think, however, the best plan will be to take these documents over to your uncle and ask his advice on the subject. What do you say?"

"That's right. He's just the man to size up a thing of this kind, and he'll tell you right off what you ought to do about it. Come on, let's go now," said Morris, reaching for his hat.

"Hold on, Joe. There's no rush. I'm not going down to the point with these papers about me while that convict is at large."

"I forgot about that," replied his chum, in a disappointed tone.

"Besides, it's about lunch-time. You're going to eat with me, ain't you?"

"Sure, if you say so."

"All right. I'll go down stairs and tell mother."

Seymour found his mother in the kitchen.

"I wish you'd go down to the grocery store and leave an order, Seymour," she said to him.

"Certainly, mother. I'll go right away. Where is the order?"

"On the dining-room table."

The boy found it and returned to his room.

"Come along, Joe. I'm going down to the grocery to order some things."

Morris grabbed his hat and the boys left the house.

At the grocery they found the proprietor talking to a stout salesman from a wholesale house in San Francisco, who had called to get an order from him.

"There's the boy, now, who gave the information about the convicts," said the groceryman. "Come here, Atwood, let me introduce you to Mr. Bruce."

"Happy to know you, young man," said the salesman.

"I see you've done the authorities a service by putting them on to the chaps who escaped from San Quentin."

"I did the best I could, but they only got the dead man."
 "They've caught the other fellow, too, about an hour ago. Haven't you heard?"

"No. You don't say!"

"Yes, they nailed him down near the bay."

"I'm mighty glad to hear it," replied Seymour, feeling as if a big load had been removed from his mind.

"Of course you know there was \$1,000 reward offered for information leading to the capture of those rascals. You'll come in for that without a doubt. Allow me to be the first to congratulate you."

"Thank you, sir. I hope I'll get it. Money always comes in very handy."

"Oh, I guess there isn't much fear but you'll get it. Those chaps were not supposed to be in this neighborhood until you told where you had run across them. The Alameda police found the dead convict, and State Detective Jackson and his associates got the other villain a short time ago. He'll be back in his cell before night, I guess."

After some further conversation Seymour left the order for groceries and then he and Morris started to return to the Atwood cottage.

"It's a great relief to me to know that Bristol has been caught," said Seymour as they walked back up the street.

"Sure it is," replied Morris.

"I felt it in my bones that that rascal meant to reach me if he could. Now he won't have the chance. He'll have to put in ten long years of time before he can be master of his own actions again."

"Long before that the Cocos Island treasure ought to be credited to your bank account," grinned Joe.

"I hope so—to both our accounts," he replied, doubtfully.

"To both of our accounts!" exclaimed Joe, eagerly. "Are you going to let me in on it?"

"Why not? I expect you to take a hand in the enterprise if we ever find a way to carry it out. I'm ready to divide even in that case."

"Put it there, old man!" cried Joe, holding out his hand. "We must find that treasure if we have to break a leg to do it."

"I hope we'll find it without meeting such hard luck as that," laughed Seymour, letting himself and companion in at the front door of the cottage.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE GRIP OF THE FOG.

There being no longer any reason why Seymour should fear to venture near the bay shore, after lunch he and Joe started for the home of the latter's uncle.

This time they didn't walk, but went in the Morris buggy, which Joe was entitled to use when no one else wanted it.

They were disappointed not to find Joe's relative at home, as he had gone to Oakland on business.

"Let's take a sail," suggested Morris. "He'll be home by the time we get back. We'll stay to supper, and afterwards we'll show him the Cocos Island documents in the library."

This was satisfactory to Seymour, so the two boys went down to the private dock where the catboat Sea Foam was moored.

"There's a spanking breeze this afternoon," said Joe, as he cast loose the painter from the ringbolt and stepped on board the boat, where Seymour had already preceded him, and was busily hoisting the sail.

"That's what it is," agreed his companion, as the Sea Foam shot away from the wharf and pointed her nose out into the bay.

"Where'll we go?" asked Joe.

"Anywhere you say," replied Seymour.

"Then we'll go down toward Alcatraz."

"All right," answered his chum, seating himself on the weather side of the cockpit, while Joe took his place beside the tiller and steered the boat.

Alcatraz Island was the site of one of the harbor fortifications, and lay some distance ahead.

The Sea Foam skimmed along like a gull, under the influence of the rattling wind which careened her over till her strip of copper sheathing flashed back the rays of the early afternoon sun.

"It won't take us long to make Alcatraz at this rate," grinned Joe.

"I should say not."

"Do you know, I wouldn't mind going as far as 'The Heads,'" said Morris, who was right in his element when afloat.

"The Heads" was the entrance to the "Golden Gate" and San Francisco Bay, and was quite a long trip for Joe to suggest, but just at that moment he was in a kind of reckless humor, and had Seymour proposed San Pablo Bay as their destination he would have agreed, and then suggested that they keep on further to the mouth of the Sacramento River, even if they didn't get back to Alameda till the next morning.

"We might go as far as Saucilito," replied Seymour, "but 'The Heads' is just a little too far, don't you think, if you expect to get back to the Point around supper-time?"

"Ho! I don't care if we don't get back for a month," chuckled Joe.

Of course he didn't mean that, but, all the same, Morris had reason to recall the reckless expression before many hours had passed over their heads.

The Sea Foam was hitting it up at a lively gait, and the two chums were in high glee over her speed.

It wasn't long before she approached a big brig lying low in the water in mid-stream.

"Bet a dollar that's the Mary Ann, the craft that Andy Blake's father is part owner and skipper of, and Andy himself second mate. Andy told me they were going to sail for Sidney some day this week," said Joe.

"You've hit it all right, for I can see the name on her stern," replied Seymour.

"I wonder if Andy is on board. I'm going to steer close to her."

He did, and as they drew close to the brig a head popped over the rail and hailed them.

"Sea Foam, ahoy!"

"There's Andy now!" cried Joe, waving his hand and throwing the Foam up into the wind so she lost her way and drifted around under the brig's stern to leeward.

"Where are you fellows bound?" asked Blake, with an air of interest.

"Down to Alcatraz, and maybe further," replied Seymour.

"Don't you want to come along?" grinned Joe. "We'll fetch you back all right in a couple of hours or so."

"I don't mind if I do," laughed Andy. "The old man is ashore and won't return till after dark. We sail in the morning with the first of the flood, so this will be the last chance I'll have to see you chaps for many moons."

Andy tossed a rope over the brig's side, and as Joe allowed the Sea Foam to bump gently against the vessel the young second mate slid down the rope and landed in the catboat's cockpit.

Then Joe eased out the mainsail so as to catch the breeze again and she glided away and ahead of the Mary Ann.

"I never ran across boys who liked the water so well as you two," remarked Andy, as he perched himself beside Seymour, against the weather rail. "You ought to make a sea voyage for a change, just to see what it is like."

"I wish I could," replied Seymour.

"Same here, old man," chipped in Morris. "I'd sooner go with you in the Mary Ann to Australia than back to school next term. I would, upon my honor."

"And I'd like to have you both aboard this trip," replied Andy. "We'd have a gallus old time; that is, of course, if you were passengers. I wouldn't recommend young gents like you to ship before the mast merely for the sake of going to sea. Oh, dear, no. You'd wish you were ashore before twelve hours had passed over your heads. A common sailor's life is a beastly hard one, and he gets more sea blessings in a shorter space of time than any man on earth."

"Ho! I guess you're right, Andy," grinned Joe. "You ought to know, for you've been there before your father thought you knew enough to berth aft."

"Oh, I had it easy to what I'd been up again in another craft. The old man treats his hands like Christians, that's why they like to sail with him. There's two men aboard who have been with him for some years."

The boys chinned in this way till the catboat drew near to the Government island.

"Shall we land at Alcatraz wharf?" asked Joe.

"I'm not stuck on doing so," answered Seymour.

"None for me," laughed Andy.

"Then it's Saucilito for ours, I suppose," chuckled Morris, laying the boat's head in that direction.

"This boat of yours is a hummer all right," said Andy.

"You can bet she walks when the breeze has weight to it," answered Joe, proud of his uncle's property.

It was still early in the afternoon when they approached Saucilito.

"Let's keep on toward 'The Heads,'" suggested Joe, proud of his uncle's property.

"All right. Let her go," consented Seymour.

As for Andy Blake, he didn't care where the Sea Foam went so long as he got back to the Mary Ann by dark.

With Fort Point on their left and Angel Island on the right, the boat skimmed along like one of the numerous sea gulls about them, and almost before they realized the fact they were in the Golden Gate with "The Heads" right before them.

The ocean looked a bit hazy in the distance, and the descending sun shone like a dull red ball, which fact ought to have warned them of the approach of the evening fog, but Joe and his chum were too much occupied telling Andy about the Cocos Island treasure, and how Seymour was in possession of a clew to the same, which documents the boy exhibited to prove their story, to notice the signs ahead.

Any one who has lived some time in San Francisco knows how quick a fog comes in from the ocean—that it is all around you almost before you have any idea of its approach, at least that has been my experience of over twenty years.

On this occasion the mist seemed to blow in through "The Heads" all at once.

Five minutes before it had looked comparatively clear before the catboat, now she suddenly sailed right into a bank of fog that quite bewildered Joe and astonished his companions.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRANGE BRIG.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Morris. "I guess we'd better go back."

"I guess we had, too," replied Seymour.

"Well, look out, I'm going to come about."

Joe pushed the tiller away from him, and the Sea Foam started to swing around, when just at that critical moment a heavy flaw struck the catboat and her starboard rail, just vacated by Seymour and Andy, who were scrambling to port, dipped 'way under water, and for the moment it looked as if she was about to capsize.

Indeed, she probably would have done so, for Joe had not eased her off quick enough, when her light mast snapped close above the roof of the trunk cabin, from the strain brought so suddenly upon it, and away went the mainsail, overboard, where it dragged in the water and prevented the boat from fully righting, as she otherwise would have done.

Andy, with the instinct of the sailor in this emergency, dashed forward upon the roof of the cabin, and lifting the lower boom bodily, released the loop at the heel end from

the stump of the mast and threw the whole thing into the water.

The catboat righted at once and drifted away, oceanward.

"This is a nice kettle of fish," almost groaned Morris. "How the dickens are we going to get back now, and we're almost at 'The Heads?'"

The situation was not only embarrassing, but decidedly serious.

They were completely surrounded by a dense fog, which might last all night, and the tide was running out, carrying the Sea Foam with it.

"It's bad enough for you fellows," said Andy Blake, "but think of me. We are bound seaward as sure as you live, and are likely to drift out to the Farallones, or even beyond, before we're picked up. I shall lose my ship, and the old man will be wilder than a nest of disturbed hornets. I tell you this is hard luck."

Seymour and Joe readily agreed with him.

"What are we going to do?" asked Joe, appealingly. "You're a navigator, Andy. Can't you suggest something?"

"What can we do?" replied Andy, with a glum look. "The sail has gone by the board, and we're about as helpless as a log adrift."

And so they were.

And to make matters worse they were right in the track of the incoming Italian fishing smacks, and very liable to be run down and sunk in the fog.

Seymour baled out the water, which had come into the cockpit when the boat heeled over so far that time, but this didn't take him long.

"This will be a cruise and a half, I reckon, before we're through with it," said Morris, dolefully, as he reseated himself beside the now useless tiller.

"You're apt to get all the salt water you want and perhaps more before we're taken in tow to-morrow morning," answered Andy, resignedly.

"To-morrow morning!" gasped Joe.

"Exactly. From what I know of these fogs, and I know a little, I guess, it will hold this way all night. It's getting dark now."

"This is fierce," said Seymour, wondering what his mother would do when he didn't turn up within a reasonable time.

"It's more than fierce," interjected Joe. "The folks won't know what has become of us. They'll have a fit as sure as you live if we don't turn up before to-morrow."

"If any craft runs foul of us during the night we'll never turn up," replied Andy, gloomily.

"Oh, lord, don't talk that way!" groaned Joe. "Things are bad enough as they are."

That's what Seymour thought, but he didn't say anything.

Before long the wind veered around and blew quite fresh off shore.

This helped if anything to push them still further seaward.

Darkness closed in around them and the prospect looked gloomier than ever.

They wrapped themselves in blankets taken from the lockers to keep the chill of the damp fog away, and sat in the cockpit like three melancholy crows on a fence, for they were afraid to go into the cabin lest their little craft be run down by some incoming vessel, and in that case they would have no show at all for their lives.

The Sea Foam continued to drift further and further away to the southwest from the coast of California during the night, which was the longest and by far the most miserable the boys had ever passed in their lives.

At length, after many weary hours, the dense, white vapor, which brooded heavily over the surface of the water, began to lighten up in the east.

"It's getting on to sunrise, fellows," said Andy Blake.

"I suppose the fog will lift pretty soon, then," replied Seymour.

"It ought to, but there's no telling when it will break away," answered Andy.

"Ugh!" grunted Joe, and that was all he said.

In due time the sun rose, but its rays produced no other effect on the fog than to give it a sort of brassy hue.

For some hours there had been little or no wind stirring.

Now a light breeze sprang up, causing the mist to undulate in large, white volumes.

At intervals thereafter a break would occur in the bank of vapor, permitting the sun to show a fleeting glimpse of his broad, rayless, yellow disk, which, from its strange appearance, rather increased than diminished the gloom while it was visible.

An hour later, eight o'clock by Seymour's watch, the mist suddenly cleared away like magic, leaving the catboat rising and falling upon the blue waters of the broad Pacific sparkling in the sunshine.

Joe sprang to his feet and, shading his eyes with his hands, looked long and earnestly astern for the coast of California, which he had confidently counted on seeing not so many miles away, but there wasn't a vestige of land in sight.

"Great hornspoons!" he ejaculated, in dismay. "Where have we got to?"

The others had followed his gaze and were just as disappointed.

Then all three turned around and swept the sea forward.

There, not more than a few hundred yards distant, was a small brig, under her upper and lower topsails, foresail, jib and foretopmast staysail, but her yards swung around at opposite angles to one another, showing that she was hope to.

"Hurrah!" shouted Joe. "The country's safe after all."

The boys stood up, waved their arms and shouted lustily as the brig slowly closed in on the catboat, but not the slightest notice was taken of them.

"Those chaps must be all asleep aboard there," said Seymour. "I haven't seen a solitary head above the rail yet."

"They can't be all below," said Andy. "The watch on deck must be moving about and ought to have heard us by this time. She's only a hundred yards away now."

The boys looked anxiously at the brig, but apart from a thin whiff of smoke, which rose lazily into the air from the galley stovepipe, not a sign of life was to be seen aboard of her.

"Come, fellows," said Andy. "Let's shout all together."

"Brig ahoy-oy!" roared the three boys through their hands, in megaphone fashion.

"That's loud enough to wake the dead," remarked the young second mate. "They must hear that."

A dark, shaggy head suddenly appeared above the low forecandle rail.

"There's somebody now!" cried Joe, joyously.

"Bow—wow—wow!" came in sharp accents from the head.

"It's a dog," said Seymour.

"That's something," replied Andy. "His actions will attract the attention of the watch, at any rate."

"Bow—wow—wow! Bow—wow—wow!"

The brig was only fifty yards away, and would apparently bump into the wreck of the sailboat.

At that moment Andy's nautical eye noticed something that probably would not have attracted the notice of Joe and Seymour.

The boats were missing from the two davits on the starboard side of the brig, and the tackle was hanging loose just above the water.

"There's something funny about the craft," said Andy. "Look at that tackle swinging there. Looks as if the two missing boats had been recently lowered."

"It does that," replied Seymour, with a look of curious interest.

"Do you think the brig has been abandoned?" asked Joe, opening his eyes.

"Hardly. There must be somebody aboard now. Don't you see that smoke from the galley? The cook is getting breakfast."

"Well, if there's anybody aboard they ought to take notice of us. Let's give another shout."

This suggestion was acted upon, but attracted notice from nobody but the dog, who began to bark again, and frisk about on the forecandle deck.

"This is the strangest thing I ever saw," said Andy. "Since they won't take the trouble to invite us aboard, we'll have to invite ourselves."

"That's right," acquiesced Joe. "We can't float around out here with nothing to eat and no means of reaching shore again. What have they got those yards braced about in that funny way for?"

"The brig is hove to," replied Andy. "Evidently waiting for the boats' crews to return."

"But where are the boats?" cried Joe, looking all around the horizon.

"Ask me something easier, Joe."

The brig, whose name, San Jacinto, appeared in gilt letters at her prow, gradually came nearer and nearer, until at last Andy grasped one of the hanging falls by which the brig's boats had been lowered and hung on.

"Grab hold and cling on while I shin up and see what's doing aboard."

The two boys did so, and, like a monkey, Andy pulled himself up, hand over hand, grabbed one of the iron davits and slid down on to the deck, where he disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

A MYSTERY OF THE SEA.

Seymour and Joe, clinging to the davit tackle, waited, impatiently, for their companion to reappear.

The minutes passed and still there was no sign of him.

The dog had disappeared from the forecandle, and the boys could hear him barking aft at a great rate.

"Andy takes a long time to bring somebody to our assistance, don't you think?" remarked Joe.

"Oh, well, what's the odds!" replied his chum. "It doesn't bother us much to hold on to this tackle, and while we do we can't drift away."

At that moment Andy's head appeared at the rail above.

"Can you fellows shin up that tackle?" he asked.

"I guess so," replied Seymour.

"Well, make the catboat's painter fast to one of those blocks and then come aboard."

Seymour did so, and then, one after the other, the boys climbed up the ropes to the davit and slid down on deck, where they were tumultuously greeted by the dog.

"Where's the people who ought to be aboard? I don't see any one," said Joe, looking around.

"There isn't a soul aboard, not even the skipper or the cook," replied Andy.

"Not a soul aboard!" gasped Joe.

"Not one. And the funniest thing of all," said Andy, in a hushed voice, as if discovery had deeply and unpleasantly impressed him, "is that not only is the galley fire lighted, with fresh coal, apparently, but there's a pot of lobsouse cooking on the stove, as if the cook had only just stepped out and would return at any moment. Say, fellows, I don't like the looks of this thing at all."

"Let's take a look at the galley," said Seymour.

Andy, with evident nervousness, led the way, and all three entered the place.

It was exactly as Blake had said.

The fire was burning brightly and a pot containing a kind of meat and vegetable stew was simmering on the stove.

There was also a pot of coffee warming at the back, and on a shelf was a tin vessel full of ship's biscuit.

The galley looked neat and clean, and the pots, pans, tin plates, cups, knives and forks were as bright as scouring could make them.

"Have you been in the cabin?" asked Seymour of the young mate.

"Yes. And I looked into every corner of it."

"How about the forecandle?"

"I've looked into the fo'k's'le. Not a soul there."

"There's some mystery here," answered Seymour.

Andy nodded, solemnly.

"The brig has either been deserted this morning by all hands from the skipper down," he said, earnestly, "or she's——"

"She's what?" asked Seymour.

"Haunted," replied Andy, in a hollow voice.

"Good lor'!" exclaimed Joe, bolting out of the galley.

Seymour was startled by Andy's suggestion, but he didn't believe in any such thing.

"I didn't know you were so superstitious, Andy."

"If you'd lived as long aboard ship as I have you'd feel that way yourself."

"Well, I tell you one thing, I feel mighty hungry just now, and that stew smells so good I believe I could get away with the whole of it. Let's sail in and clean it up. What do you say?"

Andy looked wistfully at the pot.

It was clear he had a hankering in that direction himself.

"I'd like to," he said, "but——"

"But what?" asked Seymour, impatiently.

"I'm afraid of it."

"What's the matter with it? It looks done to a turn. I never saw a nicer stew in my life," remarked Seymour, licking his lips in anticipation of a feed.

"I'd like to know who made that stew," said Andy, solemnly.

"Well, no ghost did it, I'll swear to that."

"How can you tell?" replied Andy, looking fearfully around the little galley.

"Oh, don't talk such rot! I'm going to taste it."

"I wouldn't if I was you."

Seymour paid no attention to him, but taking a spoon, lifted a portion of the stew on to a tin plate and then began to swallow it with great relish.

"This is the finest ever," he said, with his mouth full.

"You don't know what you're missing."

The temptation was too much for Andy, who proceeded, with ludicrous caution, to ladle out a plateful.

It tasted as good as it looked, and Andy sailed into it at once.

Joe, who had been watching them from the door, and whose appetite was also on edge, re-entered the galley and helped himself, too.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, "this is all to the mustard, bet your life!"

"Well, I guess yes!" said Seymour, refilling his plate, an example immediately followed by Andy.

They helped themselves to the biscuits.

"Kind of hard, but toothsome, just the same," commented Seymour.

Then he poured out three tin cups full of coffee.

"Where's the milk and sugar?" asked Joe, looking around.

Andy laughed.

"You don't expect to find milk aboard ship, do you?"

"What's the matter with condensed milk?"

"There may be some in the pantry for the cap'n's table, but the foremast hands take their coffee in the dark."

"Where's the pantry? I don't like coffee in the dark," said Joe.

"First door as you enter the cabin."

"Come along and show me the way," said Joe, who obviously didn't want to go aft alone.

While Andy and Joe were absent, Seymour glanced about the deck, through the galley door.

He noticed that the forehatch was lying bottom upward beside the combing, and the appearance of some of the ropes indicated decided carelessness on the part of the late crew, yet no sound was heard save the creaking of the blocks as the ropes pulled back and forth through them.

Andy and Joe presently returned with a bowl of sugar, but no canned milk.

"We'll have to drink it raw," said Joe, making a wry face. "There isn't a sign of condensed milk in the pantry."

They finished their breakfast, gave the last of the stew to the dog, and then went out on deck, feeling a hundred per cent. better.

"Maybe there's some one in the hold," said Seymour, pointing to the open hatch. "Let's holler down."

So they gathered around the hatch and shouted lustily, but to no effect.

The dog put his forefeet on the combing of the hatch and barked loudly.

Then he ran to the starboard side and whisked up and down near the davits, as much as to say that his human companions had gone away in that direction.

The boys paid little attention to him, but made their way to the cabin.

To judge by the general appearance of affairs here one would have said that the officers had just gone on deck.

The table was set for breakfast, and on a locker was the log-slate with the reckoning partially worked out.

"This beats anything I ever heard of," said Andy, as he piloted the way into what he asserted was the cap'n's stateroom.

A gold watch hung at the head of the berth, which was rumpled just as its occupant had left it.

"Why, this watch is going," said Seymour, taking it in his hand. "That's another good sign that the brig hasn't been many hours deserted."

After they had gone over every part of the cabin, including the pantry, which they found tolerably well stocked with what might be called cabin delicacies they returned on deck and found that the wind had died away completely and that a dead calm prevailed.

"We thought we were in a pretty bad scrape last night, when the Sea Foam's mast was carried away in the fog and we were left helplessly drifting out to sea," said Joe, as the three boys, for Andy was scarcely more than a big boy, stood upon the brig's quarter-deck, near the wheel, and looked all around the untenanted ocean, "but we don't seem to be much better off aboard this old hooker, except we're in no fear of immediately starving to death. The question is, where are we now, and how are we going to

get back to San Francisco? You ought to be able to figure the thing out somehow, Andy, for you're a navigator. We look to you to help us out."

"Oh, I'm not so much," replied Andy, thus appealed to. "I'm only learning the business yet. Still I guess with your help I can manage the brig if the weather holds fair. As to where we are I'll have to take a sight at noon to-day and work the thing out."

"Where do you think we are?" persisted Joe.

"Fifty miles more or less sou'west of the Farallones."

"Then we're not so far from 'Frisco after all," said Joe, in a tone of relief.

"Oh, no! There's no call to be worried. But what's the use of going back?" he said, cocking his head shrewdly to one side, and eyeing the boys with a comical grin. "Now that we've got this stanch brig under us we might do a heap sight better than that. Yes, fellows, a whole lot better. Aren't you on?"

CHAPTER X.

A MADCAP SCHEME.

Seymour and Joe regarded Andy Blake with undisguised amazement.

"What's the use of going back?" Joe repeated, as soon as he could speak. "Why, what the dickens do you mean, Andy?"

The young mate laughed.

"Don't you know that this is probably the best chance you two will ever have to make a try for that treasure at Cocos Island?"

"Gee whiz!" gasped Joe, taking in Andy's meaning now that the hole in the millstone had been pointed out to him. "So it is."

"Don't you think so, too?" said Blake, turning to Seymour.

"That depends," replied the lad, gravely.

"On what?"

"On lots of things. You see, in the first place my mother and Joe's folks haven't the least idea at this minute where we are. Would it be fair to them for us to sail away 3,000 miles south, to latitude 5 deg. 33 min. north, and longitude 86 deg. 59 min. west, on what in the end might be only a wild-goose chase?"

At Seymour's words Joe's face fell.

The distress his parents must even then be suffering had quite slipped his mind.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Andy, who was disturbed by no considerations of that kind. "We are sure to meet a dozen vessels, or a steamer or two, between here and Cocos Island, and you could send word to them that you're all right, and expect to be back in six weeks or so."

"So we could," said Joe, brightening up.

"Well, if I was sure of that," said Seymour, rather doubtfully, "I might consider the matter."

"Well, let's talk it over, anyway," said Andy, leaning against the hood of the binnacle. "Just at present the best navigator under the sun couldn't move this brig toward 'Frisco while this calm lasts. We're stuck fast here, and we might just as well talk about the Cocos Island treasure as anything else. Since you showed me those documents, Seymour, and told me the yarn of how you came by them, I've been thinking considerable about it. I wouldn't mind going shares with you if you've a mind to let me in on a good thing. I can help you lots, especially under our present circumstances. I'm the only person aboard this brig at this moment who can take her back to 'Frisco, or anywhere else. I suppose you'll both admit that?"

"Yes," admitted both Joe and Seymour, in a breath.

"Some people might call this a madcap scheme I'm proposing to you, but I think there's lots of method in it when you come to look at it in the right way. I'm satisfied that chart is genuine, and that that dead convict had the bulge on that treasure all right, only he might never, if he had lived, have found a chance to get at it in a way which would have properly benefited him. If he'd taken others into his confidence he stood a good show of being skinned out of the bulk of it. Now you boys can't do a thing toward getting hold of this pirate trove, which I've often heard about from my old man, who claimed to have the story of it down fine."

"What did your father tell you about it?" asked Joe, eagerly.

"I'll tell you later on. As I was saying, if you get back to 'Frisco, you won't have a chance like this again to go to the island without outsiders knowing something about your plans and butting in on you, even supposing your parents agreed to allow you to undertake such an expedition under proper convoy, so to speak. At any rate, I'm willing to bet they wouldn't. Ain't I right?"

Seymour and Joe admitted that he was.

"Very good," said Andy, slapping his thighs to emphasize the point he had scored. "Now I can sail this here brig right smack to the Cocos Island, providing, of course, you two will agree to lend a hand to work ship. We can go there, search for that treasure, and if we find it, load it aboard this hooker, and sail back to 'Frisco without another soul being the wiser. And we can do the whole thing in five or six weeks. You chaps will get back in time to take up your schooling, while I'll have enough money in my share to buy out the other half share in the Mary Ann, and probably more, too. Then I can take a steamer for Australia and be at Sidney when the old man sails into the harbor. You boys will probably be able to soak half a million apiece in the bank, and live like nobs for the rest of your life. What do you think of it?"

"Fine!" exclaimed Joe, enthusiastically.

"Of course it's fine. It's the chance of all our lives, and to tell you the honest truth, I'd hate to have you give it up and tell me to lay our course back to the Golden Gate."

"What's the chance of our sending word back home very soon?" asked Seymour, anxiously.

"What's the chance?" said Andy, glancing meditatively at the distant horizon.

Something attracted his attention, and he looked earnestly seaward for a moment.

The boys followed his gaze, but could see nothing.

He surprised them by jumping for the companion-ladder and disappearing into the cabin.

He returned in a moment with a spyglass, which he levelled at some distant point of the seascape.

"You asked me what chance you had to send word home, didn't you? Well, your chance is coming this way now. There's a steamer coming up the coast, probably bound for 'Frisco. You write your letters and I'll signal her to stop. Then we'll row off and hand the letters aboard her."

"Let's see the steamer!" cried Seymour and Joe, simultaneously.

Andy gave Seymour the binocular and pointed out the direction.

"There is a steamer, sure enough," Atwood said. "And I guess she's coming this way."

"To be sure she's coming this way," said Andy, as Joe took the glass to look. "Now, then, make up your minds at once. If it's Cocos Island and the treasure, why you two want to dive down into the cabin and write your letters quick. If you're afraid to put your faith in that chart and letter of instructions, why, all we can do, then, is to take a tow back to the Golden Gate, and let the steamship company get the salvage on this brig which we ought to have ourselves. It's up to you. If it was up to me I know what I'd do, all right. Remember, my boys, it's a question, probably, of a million dollars, maybe two, against home and nothing. It's an opportunity that once missed may never come again. Isn't it worth the effort?"

"What do you say, Seymour?" asked Joe, excitedly. "Do we go?"

"I'm afraid it's a madcap scheme," returned Seymour.

"What's the odds?" cried his chum. "I vote we go, now that there's a chance of our folks hearing from us by to-morrow."

"It's up to you, Seymour," said Andy, himself now greatly excited. "You're not going to let us down with a dull thud, are you? Think of becoming a millionaire at eighteen! Doesn't the prospect appeal to you?"

"You really want to go, do you, Joe?" asked Atwood, earnestly.

"Bet your life I do!" his chum answered.

"All right. We'll go, then."

"Hurrah!" cried Joe, cutting a caper on the deck. "Cocos Island forever!"

"You'll never regret your choice, Seymour," said Andy, with sparkling eyes. "Now get down in the cabin, both of you, and write your letters. But, remember, not a word in them about the treasure or Cocos Island. The papers would have it, and we'd have a hundred people from 'Frisco buzzing about our ears."

The letters were written, the steamer was signalled in due time when she got within half a mile of the brig, and

Andy and Joe rowed over to her in the catboat and consigned their letters to the purser to be mailed on the steamer's arrival at San Francisco.

CHAPTER XI.

COCOS ISLAND.

Ten days later, just at sunrise, Andy Blake, standing at the wheel of the brig *San Jacinto*, which was under all plain sail, sighted land for the first time since that memorable fog, blowing in through the Golden Gate, shut out the shores of California from the eyes of himself and his young companions, Seymour Atwood and Joe Morris.

Andy, who, day by day, had carefully picked their course upon the chart he had found in the captain's cabin, knew the only land to be found in this part of the Pacific Ocean was Cocos Island.

His previous day's reckoning had assured him that they would reach the island, wind permitting, some time that morning, and he had been on the lookout to catch the first glimpse of the spot where he confidently expected they would find the treasure trove of which they were in search.

"Land ho!" he bawled down the companion ladder to attract the attention of his young companions, who were asleep below.

Joe, who had turned in at midnight after calling his chum to stand the next watch, and Seymour, who had been relieved at four by Andy, were out of their bunks in a twinkling, and up on deck in their under garments, for tropical weather prevailed in the latitude the brig had now reached.

"Look yonder, fellows, and gaze upon the promised land—Cocos Island."

"Is that really Cocos Island?" exclaimed Joe, hardly believing that the smudge on the distant horizon was the island of his dreams.

"That's the only land within 500 miles," replied Andy, with a satisfied grin. "That's Cocos Island for fair."

"It looks more like a cloud than anything else from here," said Seymour.

"Get the binocular and you'll find it is land, all right," said Andy.

Joe dashed down the companion ladder and soon returned with the spyglass, which he levelled at the distant blot on the water.

"I see trees," he said, "and something like a high hill."

Then Seymour took a peep through the glass and saw the same things.

They continued to take occasional views of the distant island as the *San Jacinto* drew nearer in, and with every look the shore grew clearer, the trees more numerous and the hill, to which a second was added, higher.

Seymour and Joe finally completed their dressing, and then the latter relieved Andy at the wheel while the young mate went forward to light a fire in the galley and prepare

breakfast, a duty which fell regularly to his lot, as he was the only one of the three who knew anything about the culinary art.

"I hope we shan't find anybody on the island," said Joe, as he held the brig down to her course.

"That's something that we haven't figured on. We kind of took it for granted that the place was uninhabited," replied Seymour.

"Well, we've a revolver apiece and a rifle to defend ourselves, if such necessity should arise, but I'd rather not have to use them against human beings," said Joe. "It's all very well to read in story books about boys in a situation like ours, doing a lot of promiscuous shooting, in which the author sees that they come off first best, but excuse me from that kind of fun."

"We're not likely to run against any savages in this part of the ocean," remarked Seymour. "They're confined to the South Pacific islands."

"I'm not sorry," replied Joe.

"Cannibalism is somewhat out of fashion these times among the natives of the South Seas, I guess, though we do hear once in a while of a missionary being served up on the half shell to some pot-bellied chief."

After breakfast the three boys gathered on the poop-deck of the brig and watched the island grow in size and beauty before their eyes.

"I suppose we want to put in at the place called Chatham Bay," said Andy, "but we may not be able to get in there. I'll have to show you fellows how to cast the log line. The best way and by far the safest will be for us to bring the brig to some little distance off shore and go to the island in the small boat and make our soundings. We don't want to run the hooker aground. We might not be able to get off again, then we'd be in a pretty mess. Somehow or other I think Wafer Bay is the largest of the two and the most likely anchorage ground, even if it is some little distance from the spot where the treasure is buried. After we sight Chatham Bay we'll go on to the other, and if the distance isn't too far, and it looks better, we'll put in there. In either case it will be prudent, as I have said, to investigate first in a rowboat."

In the course of an hour they opened up an indentation in the island, which they judged to be Chatham Bay.

It was a low, sandy shore, and was backed by trees and dense shrubbery.

A tolerably high and rocky headland trended away to the right, but the shore on the left was not so bold or forbidding.

"That's Chatham Bay, all right," exclaimed Seymour, who was looking through the glass, "for I can see a tall, spire-like projection which looks as if it might well stand for Chimney Rock."

"Let's see," said Joe, eagerly. "So it is," he added, after a peep at the shore, now about half a mile distant.

"We're close enough," said Andy. "Get busy now, and we'll heave to."

Under Andy's directions the brig was brought to a standstill.

"One of you ought to remain aboard," he said. "Who will it be?"

"Let's toss for it," said Joe. "That's the fairest way of deciding the question."

"Heads I win, and tails you lose," grinned Seymour, taking a quarter from his pocket.

"Not on your life!" cried Joe. "You can't bunco me that way. Heads you win and tails I win."

"All right," laughed Seymour, pitching up the coin.

It turned up heads.

"Say, you're too lucky for anything!" growled Morris, who didn't like the idea of staying back in the brig.

The small boat was lowered and Andy and Seymour started for the island, while Joe followed their movements through the glass.

They spent an hour sounding about the bay, then they landed close to the creek.

Securing the boat they walked up the bank of the creek until they came to a big, flat rock.

"The landmarks appear to be here, all right," said Seymour, in considerable excitement. "It begins to look as if we might really find the pirate's treasure."

"You can bet we will," replied Andy, who seemed to have entertained no doubts from the first.

"When the shadow of Chimney Rock is thrown exactly across this rock, the point of that shadow will be our starting point. That's according to the directions."

"That means we can't do anything till some time in the afternoon," said Andy.

"The trees and dense underbrush are there all right. According to the cross mark indicating the cave, the treasure is somewhere yonder," said Seymour, pointing.

"We can't do anything more here now, so we'll get back to the brig," said his companion, and back they went, to give the eager and expectant Joe a history of all they had seen ashore.

Then they filled away to take a look at Wafer Bay, distant about six miles around the headland, which they found to be a much safer and deeper anchorage than Chatham Bay, so they entered and came to anchor there, under the lee of a big bluff, which promised protection if it came on to blow hard from any point but S. W.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.

So far they had seen no signs of human life, but as the island was a large one, the extent of which they couldn't judge, there was still every chance for inhabitants to be present.

Many miles away to the south and also to the southeast, they saw two mountain peaks, and these features gave them some idea of the size of the island.

"After we shall have found the treasure we can sail around the island before we start for home," said Seymour.

"I'd like to know just how large it really is."

"When shall we begin operations?" asked Joe, eagerly.

"Right away after dinner," replied Seymour. "I guess it will be safe to leave the brig to herself. At any rate, that's what we'll do. We'll row around the promontory and up the creek to the flat rock. As soon as we locate this treasure we can either bring the brig around or carry the stuff to her. I should say that will depend on how much treasure there actually is in the cave."

Accordingly, after the mid-day meal and a short rest, they put a compass, a lead-line marked off in feet and fathoms, an axe, a crowbar, a pick and a couple of shovels into the boat.

Then each placed a revolver in his pocket to be prepared to protect themselves in case of emergency.

Everything being in readiness, they shoved off from the bring and rowed about the formidable-looking headland for Chatham Bay.

Arrived at the bay, they rowed up the creek until they came to the flat rock at which Morris looked with great interest and attention.

As it yet wanted some little time before the shadow would strike the flat rock, the boys sat down in the shade of the tropical brush to wait.

The heat and their recent exertions caused them to feel drowsy, but they fought the feeling off, as the issue at stake was sufficient to keep their attention alive.

Close on to three o'clock, by Seymour's watch, it was observed that the shadow of Chimney Rock had lengthened out and swung around close to the flat rock.

The three boys grew much excited and came out into the hot sunshine to watch it creep up to the rock.

As soon as the edge of the shadow touched the rock, Seymour said:

"Now, Joe, get hold of that stone, go down yonder to the point of the shadow and follow it up. When you hear me shout place the rock upon the ground at the very apex of the shadow. Do you understand?"

Joe understood and started to carry out his chum's directions.

But an unforeseen difficulty presented itself at this point.

Morris found that the shadow lengthened out further than they had had any idea that it would.

The consequence was Joe, as the critical moment approached, saw that it would fall upon a thick mass of underbrush, which he could not penetrate.

Seymour and Andy, who were alternately watching Joe and the progress of the shadow across the stone, were surprised to see him stop close to the line of underbrush and stand there a moment or two with the stone in his hand.

Then they saw him drop the stone, and after advancing a few feet into the bushes, turn around and come toward them in a dejected kind of way.

"What's the matter, Joe?" shouted Seymour.

Morris came on, without paying any attention to the hail.

"By ginger!" exclaimed Andy, with a snort of disgust.

"I can see what's the matter. The shadow has gone into that brush and he can't follow it further."

"Too bad," said Seymour, in a tone of great disappointment.

Then he looked down at the broad surface of the stone.

The shadow cast by Chimney Rock lay exactly across its center.

"Nothing can be done to-day," said Andy, gloomily, "except to take the axe and clear away some of that obstruction."

When Joe rejoined them he confirmed Andy's solution of the difficulty.

"The blamed thing went right into that brush. I don't know how far, but it went in, just the same. We've got to clear the stuff away before we can follow it to the point where it's got to be marked," he said. "The quickest way will be to set it on fire, for there's a lot of it, and it's as thick as mud."

"No," replied Andy; "at least not till we've tried the axe method, for it would make too big a bonfire. We don't know but there are people in the center or at the other end of the island, and a big smoke such as a fire of that kind is bound to make would naturally attract them to the spot, and then we'd have a deuce of a time getting rid of them."

"Andy is right," agreed Seymour. "We'll try and cut away a wide space of the brush."

"We'll find it a mighty hard job under this tropical sun."

"Well, s'posing it is," answered Andy. "It's got to be done, and so we might just as well start in and do it, so that we can be in shape to get our bearings to-morrow afternoon."

Seymour went to the boat, got the axe and started for the line of brush.

Andy and Joe followed him.

All three saw they had a formidable contract on their hands, because not only had they to clear a way for the shadow, but afterward they would be obliged to cut away the brush to the W. S. W. as far as their chart instructions indicated it would be necessary to go in that direction.

Taking turns, they went at the work with a vigor that brought the sweat pouring down their faces.

"I guess I'm earning my share in that treasure," grinned Joe, who was perspiring like a bull, as he handed the axe over to Seymour at the end of a fifteen-minute spell of what he looked upon as the hardest work he had ever done in his life.

"You will appreciate it all the more, old fellow," replied his chum, starting in once more to widen the circle already well started.

Andy was accustomed to hard labor and plenty of it, and it didn't affect him quite so unpleasantly as it did his companions.

He brought the pick into action and did about double his share of the work.

They worked pretty steadily until the sun kissed the edge of the horizon, and by that time had accomplished almost as much as they considered necessary to enable them to get their bearings.

"We'll finish this in the morning before the heat of the day gets too oppressive," said Andy, calling a halt. "It is sundown, and darkness falls very quick in this latitude, so we want to start back to the brig right away."

Seymour and Joe were only too glad to knock off, and they returned to the spot where the boat lay.

Pushing off into the narrow stream they rowed leisurely down to the bay and then started along the base of the headland.

They were hardly out of the bay before night came upon them like the sudden snuffing of a candle, almost.

The sky, however, was resplendent with stars, so that the gloom was by no means intense, and they found no trouble in keeping the course close inshore till they rounded the point at Wafer Bay and saw the dark outline of the brig ahead.

After supper they were exhausted enough to get their blankets out on deck and turn in under the broad canopy of heaven.

There wasn't any necessity to stand watch now.

There was nothing to disturb them.

The shore lay silent and dark within a few cable's length, and the soft, rhythmic noise of the surf swelling in upon the rocks and beach lulled them to sleep.

It was some time after sunrise when Andy awoke.

Without disturbing his companions he went to the galley and started to prepare breakfast.

When it was ready he aroused Seymour and Joe, and the three soon disposed of the morning meal and prepared to return to the scene of their previous afternoon's labor.

"I wish we'd put in at Chatham Bay," said Joe, as the three sat on the roof of the cabin, Andy smoking a pipe, which, with a box of prime tobacco, he had found in one of the lockers. "It would save us this long row around the headland, which is all of six miles if it's a foot."

"You want things too easy, Joe," laughed Seymour.

"Well, isn't the easiest way always the best?"

"Some folks are born lazy," grinned Andy. "Others acquire laziness, and still others have laziness thrust upon them. To which class do you belong, Joe?"

"Oh, go bag your head!" snorted Morris. "You're used to hustling. Seymour and I are not in your class. We've been brought up differently."

"That's right, too," replied Andy. "Still I haven't noticed that Seymour has done any great amount of kicking so far."

"Which means that I'm doing it all, is that what you're trying to get at?" in an aggrieved tone.

"Don't get mad, Joe," said Seymour, soothingly.

"Oh, I ain't mad," retorted his chum. "If you fellows are ready to start I am. I want to get my eyes on that treasure before dark, if the thing is possible."

The others were of the same mind, so as Andy had finished his pipe, they took to the brig's boat without further delay and rowed out of the bay.

CHAPTER XIII.

DISAPPOINTMENTS TWO AND THREE.

The sun looked peculiar this morning, and Joe remarked it.

"There's going to be a change in the weather, I'm afraid," replied Andy, with a wise look in his eyes.

"I hope not," said Joe, anxiously. "Bad weather will mean delay."

"The weather has very little respect for persons or things," replied Andy.

The further they rowed to the east the more apparent was the aspect of the ocean in that direction.

A haze hung along the watery horizon while the sun looked inflamed and angry, as if the luminary had got out of bed on the wrong side and was looking for a scrap.

"It's enough to make a fellow mad," growled Joe, tugging viciously at his oar. "No sooner do we get on the ground than something turns up to knock our plans edgewise."

"You should be thankful we got here without running into a heavy blow," said Andy. "Had we been caught in one we'd have had to run before it, and that would have meant being driven perhaps hundreds of miles out of our course, supposing we were lucky enough to weather it. Remember, we three can hardly handle the brig except in fine weather, similar to what we were so fortunate as to have all the way down from the California coast. We ought to thank our lucky stars that we made the trip in so short a time. The brig couldn't have done better had she been regularly manned. If a storm does come up it won't last long, though it may be pretty severe while it holds. At any rate, we're safe, and the brig is safe, so we've no cause to fear it."

Joe had nothing more to say after that, and they kept on to Chatham Bay.

When they reached the flat stone again in the creek they started in to clear away more of the brush, and long before noon they had accomplished as much as was decided to be necessary.

By that time the haze was casting a gauzy curtain over the face of the sun.

"I'm afraid we shall not get our shadow this afternoon," said Seymour, as they were resting in the shade.

"I'm thinking that way myself," replied Andy. "In fact, it's my advice that we start right back to Wafer Bay, or we may have to walk back through the jungle."

"Walk back!" exclaimed Joe, in surprise.

"Yes. The moment the blow hits this island it will raise a sea around it that will make rowing back around the headland a dangerous feat for us. We'd better go while the sea is calm."

"Oh, we've lots of time," grunted Joe. "The ocean is like a mill pond."

"You can't tell how long it will remain so. Inside of half an hour the whole appearance of things may change."

It will astonish you to see how quick that placid surface can be transformed into a raging sea."

"I think we'd better go," urged Seymour, believing that Andy's experience was a good guide to follow.

Joe said he was tired and wanted to rest awhile longer, but the vote was against him and he followed them, grumblingly, down to the boat.

There wasn't a breath of air stirring when they pushed off and started down the creek, and the same conditions prevailed while they were crossing the bay.

They had hardly got well abreast of the headland before their ears were saluted with a strange, mysterious moaning, which seemed to come from a long distance off behind them.

"Get a move on, fellows!" cried Andy, increasing his stroke.

"What's the matter now?" asked Joe. "Got another bug in your head?"

"Didn't you hear that noise?"

"Sure I heard it. What is it, anyway?"

"It's a warning of what we may soon expect to see."

"You mean of a storm?"

"Yes."

"I don't see any change."

"You'll see it sooner than you think. We don't want to be caught out here on the ocean when it comes on. We've got a four-mile pull before us yet, and little enough time to do it in."

The weird sound continued to be heard at intervals while the boys, getting down to work, lessened the distance they had to go by another mile.

Then a decided change was perceptible in the face of nature.

The glassy surface of the ocean began to exhibit certain tokens of uneasiness, as if gradually awakening from a deep sleep.

It commenced to rise and fall in long, slow undulations, like a great animal breathing, and the distant noise blended in a sort of continuous hum.

"We're likely to catch a taste of it, after all," said Andy. "Pull harder."

"Gee! I'm nearly winded now!" cried Joe, down whose face the sweat was oozing in big drops.

"Do the best you can," returned Andy. "Every pull counts now."

Another mile was traversed at this rate.

Then the wind began to come in warm, intermittent puffs.

Almost facing the east as they were, the boys could no longer make out the sun.

It had been swallowed up by a bank of dark, ominous-looking clouds, rapidly climbing toward the zenith.

By the time another mile had been gone over the air had once more become still, but it was a stillness that boded no good.

The urgency of the occasion made Joe forget his tired feeling, and he kept his eyes upon the cloud bank, the edge of which was now almost over their heads.

It was many a long day before either Joe or Seymour forgot that desperate row for their lives.

Fortunately, the storm did not strike the island until they rounded the point of land which opened up Wafer Bay, and then they got some idea, even in that sheltered spot, of what a tropical storm was like.

It was a dandy while it lasted, and it continued all the rest of the day until after sundown.

The wind blew with a fierce force and a power beyond description.

The norther which they remembered had visited San Francisco Bay some years before, and was a pretty tidy kind of blow, as any one who has ever experienced one knows, seemed very mild in comparison with this.

Next morning, when the boys awoke, nature had resumed her wonted serenity.

The sun was shining from a cloudless sky, and the only evidence of the late storm was the still slightly agitated ocean.

After breakfast they took to the boat again and returned leisurely to Chatham Bay, where they found a few trees down that had been standing the previous morning.

They whiled away the time exploring the neighborhood and resting in the shade until noon, when they ate the lunch they had brought with them.

A cool breeze relieved the heat somewhat, but for all that it was not comfortable in the sun, so they kept under shelter till three, when the shadow of Chimney Rock again approached the flat stone.

Once more Joe, stone in hand, followed the point of the shadow until a loud shout from Seymour bade him mark the apex of it at that moment.

"Well, we got it this time!" cried Morris, gleefully, as the other two came up, Andy with the compass in hand, and Seymour with the lead-line.

Placing the compass on the ground, Andy pointed out the course, W. S. W.

Seymour did not need to consult his chart, for he had the directions by heart—measure off 12 F., W. S. W.

"That means feet, of course," he said.

Joe hacked a space through the underbrush a little more than the required length, and then Seymour measured off 12 feet, while Andy sighted across the compass that the true direction might be maintained.

He moved his arms this way and that to Seymour, just as a surveyor guides his marker, until the boy stood directly in line with the W. S. W. point.

This having been accomplished, Andy went up to Seymour, and with the aid of the compass showed him where West was.

Seymour immediately faced that way.

"I see nothing but trees and brush," he said, and the other two, standing beside him, and following his gaze, saw only the same.

"All this stuff must have grown up in the last sixty odd years, since the pirate's treasure was buried, therefore I suppose there is nothing surprising in the fact that it is now no longer possible to see the gap in the rocky wall that

is somewhere ahead," he said. "So don't be disappointed, Joe, until we can investigate further."

"It means more hard work cutting the brush away for goodness knows how far," replied Joe, ruefully.

"Well, what's the use of kicking? You couldn't expect nature to stand still all those years, could you?"

"I suppose not," admitted his chum, in a tone that showed he was in the humor to take it out of nature for giving them so much trouble.

"I'll tell you a better way. We might try it at any rate," said Andy: "Get a stone and mark this spot, Joe, then with the compass we'll walk straight ahead, due west. I don't see why that won't answer as well. We should come right upon the gap in the rock, if it's there."

This suggestion was immediately acted upon, but produced no results.

The boys were able to keep right to the point of the compass by going slow, and they met with no tree directly in their path; but after walking some distance they came into an open space which showed them there was no rocky wall in that direction anywhere within reasonable distance.

There was a line of rock to the left, but it in no way covered the case.

"I'm afraid our name is mud," said Joe, feeling as if he had lost every friend he had in the world. "Things are so changed that our chance of finding the treasure begins to look mighty small."

The outlook was certainly discouraging.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TERRIBLE SURPRISE.

"Well," said Joe, that evening, while they were eating supper on board the brig, "I suppose we'll have to give this thing up after all and make our way back to 'Frisco. I never was so disappointed with anything in my life before. I was so certain we were going to walk right up to that treasure cave as soon as we got the correct bearings, that I wouldn't have sold out my share of the winnings for a hundred thousand plunks, cash down. Now I think I'd be willing to accept any old amount, if it carried a safe and speedy ticket to Alameda with it."

The boys had spent the balance of the afternoon investigating the immediate neighborhood of the 12-foot mark, after satisfying themselves that it really was properly drawn to the W. S. W., but nothing came of it.

So far as getting a line upon the treasure was concerned, they remained "all at sea," as the saying is.

So at last darkness forced them to return, unsuccessful, to the brig, three very disappointed boys.

Andy took it more to heart even than Joe, for he had built a rosy-tinted future upon this treasure, which he was as certain existed as that he breathed.

He had nothing to say on the subject from the moment the search was relinquished, and during supper appeared to be buried in thought.

The other two boys canvassed the matter in a doleful strain.

When supper was ended Andy got his pipe and went off by himself, while Seymour and Joe washed up the dishes, and then walked the deck, talking, till they got sleepy and turned in.

Seymour was in the midst of a deep sleep when he was aroused by a good shaking.

"Hello, what's the matter?" he cried, sitting up and blinking at Andy, who stood beside his bunk, lantern in hand.

"Where's that chart of Cocos Island?" asked Andy, in some excitement.

"It's in my coat," replied Seymour, wondering what the young mate wanted with it at that time of the night.

"No, it isn't, for I hunted through your clothes before I waked you."

"It isn't?" cried Seymour, leaping out of bed. "It must be."

"Well, look and see if you can find it."

"What do you want with it now?"

"I've got an idea that we made a big mistake in our calculations."

"How did we?" asked Seymour, interested at once.

"Do you remember the exact wording of the directions on the chart?"

"I do."

"Tell them to me."

"When the afternoon sun throws the shadow of Chimney Rock directly across the hollow of the flat rock, note where the point of the shadow ends, and with a compass measure off 12 F., W. S. W., and——"

"Hold on!" cried the young mate, interrupting him. "That's all I want to know. We judged F. stood for feet and we measured off 12 feet accordingly."

"Well, what does F. stand for in this case except for feet?"

"It might stand for fathoms," replied Andy, eagerly. "Therefore, instead of 12 feet we perhaps ought to have measured six times twelve, or 72 feet. I'll bet that would bring us in line with those rocks we saw away to the left."

"By George!" cried Seymour, "I believe you're right."

"I've been thinking the matter over from a dozen stand-points since supper, and had finally turned in, discouraged, when it suddenly struck me that F. was intended to represent fathoms, not feet. I wished to make sure it really was F., that's why I wanted to see the chart."

"It's F. all right," said Seymour, hunting for the paper, but not finding it. "I must have lost it somehow," he added. "However, it doesn't much matter, as I could reproduce the whole thing from memory."

"All right," replied Andy. "We'll try again to-morrow morning. We won't have to wait for the sun's shadow, as we have got the starting point marked. We'll cut a patch 75 feet W. S. W., through the brush, and then see what comes of it."

Andy then retired to his own bunk, leaving Seymour to wonder where the chart had gone, and to dream of possible success on the morrow.

When Seymour aroused Joe next morning he told him

what had passed between himself and Andy during the night.

"Why, of course it's fathoms!" cried Joe, springing out of his bunk in great excitement. "Why didn't we think of that before? A sailor would be more likely to measure by fathoms than feet, if he wanted to cover a considerable distance, and fathom is a nautical term, you know. I'll bet it's fathoms, all right."

"On the strength of this idea how much will you sell out for this morning?" grinned Seymour.

"Not for sale at any price. We're going to find that treasure to-day."

"It is to be hoped we will," replied his chum. "But I'm not so sure."

"Well, I am, so that's the difference between us, see?"

They went on deck to find that Andy was cooking breakfast in the galley.

"Say, fellows, did either of you come in here last night before you turned in?"

"Not me," replied Joe.

"Nor me," said Seymour. "Why?"

"I left a big piece of pork on that plate on the shelf, and it was missing this morning."

"The dog got at it and ate it."

"The dog wouldn't eat all the ship biscuit that was in that box, covered up, would he?"

"Hardly," smiled Seymour.

"Well, it's all gone."

"It is!" exclaimed Joe, in astonishment.

"Sure as you're alive it is. I guess there's spooks aboard this hooker after all."

"Get out!" said Seymour.

"Then how do you account for the missing food?"

"Give it up. Maybe one of the inhabitants of the island paid us a visit."

"I don't like that idea for a cent," replied Andy, shaking his head.

Neither did Seymour or Joe.

They canvassed the matter, but couldn't reach a conclusion.

Then they sat down to breakfast.

"I hope the brig won't have visitors while we're away to-day," said Andy.

"Or that we'll have them at Chatham Bay," put in Joe, uneasily.

"We'll have to chance it," said Seymour.

After the meal they set off again for the treasure-ground in the boat.

As they rowed up the creek and came in sight of the flat rock, Andy, who was steering, uttered a sudden exclamation and pointed ahead.

Seymour and Joe both turned around and looked.

There, seated on the flat rock, with his head bent over something he held in his hand, was a man.

The sound of the oars presently startled the figure.

He leaped from the rock and looked at the on-coming boat.

His face was distinctly visible in the sunlight, and both Seymour and Joe uttered a cry of amazement.

There was no mistaking that villainous countenance.

It was the face of Joe Bristol, convict and ex-beach-comber.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PIRATICAL TREASURE OF COCOS ISLAND.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Seymour. "Can that really be Joe Bristol?"

"It's he or his ghost!" cried Morris, excitedly. "How in the world did he get here? And the police had him the day we left Alameda."

The convict didn't wait for the boys to come nearer, but with a bound made off through the brush.

The two boys explained the situation to Andy, and he was very much astonished.

"Maybe it was he who visited the brig last night and got away with the missing pork and crackers," he said.

"And who went through my clothes and took the chart that I can't find."

"I'll bet it was," chipped in Joe. "He was looking at something while he was sitting on the rock."

"He must have been pretty slick to have escaped from the officers," said Andy. "But admitting that he did, which seems to be a fact, the question is, how in the world did he get out here, nearly 500 miles from the nearest land? He must have landed from a vessel that put in at the other end of the island, for we haven't seen a vessel since we've been here."

"His presence on the island complicates matters for us with a vengeance. He may have associates as bad as himself in the background. If he has we're likely to be done up," said Seymour, anxiously.

"If he hasn't he'll sneak about and keep a close watch on our actions," put in Joe, wrinkling up his forehead. "What are we going to do about it?"

"Go ahead and hunt for the treasure cave and take our chances of his bothering us. If he comes close enough I'd just as soon put a ball into such a fellow as not. I'd be doing the world a service, not speaking about ourselves," said Andy.

They landed from the boat, and after beating up the brush carefully for signs of the convict, and finding none, they concluded he had gone off somewhere, so the boys began their second search for the pirate cave.

They started in to lengthen out the 12-foot lane in the brush leading W. S. W. and found to their satisfaction that the obstruction grew thinner and thinner as they advanced, until they finally came out into a comparatively open ground.

Then they carefully measured off 12 fathoms with the lead-line, and when Andy, sighting with the compass, was certain Seymour, who held the end of the line, was in the proper position, he signalled to him and the spot was marked.

Andy then faced Seymour due west.

"I am looking directly at a wall of rock," said Seymour, "and, by George! I see a long, thin, irregular gap," he added, excitedly.

He pointed it out to Joe and Andy, and the two executed a short Indian war-dance.

"We've struck it right at last!" shouted Joe.

The three boys walked right up to the gap, which could only be seen as long as they kept in a straight line due west, and when they reached it Andy measured off 5 fathoms along the face of the rock, E. by S., which brought them in full view, and close to the creek again.

"Here's where we are to dig," said Andy, driving his heel into the ground. "Go back to the boat, Joe, and row her up here. We'll have no trouble at all in loading the stuff into the boat. I guess there's no doubt but the pirates landed the treasure here and buried it, and then arranged that roundabout scheme for finding it. I shouldn't have thought they'd have taken all that trouble when a simpler method would have answered as well."

Joe soon appeared with the boat, and then the digging commenced.

At the depth of a yard, Andy, who was wielding the shovel, struck an obstruction.

It proved to be wood, and as soon as it had been partially uncovered, showed up as a vessel's small hatch.

It was set in a wooden frame, which had been made to receive it, and had a ring in the center.

When the dirt had been entirely cleared away from it they ran a bit of rope through the ring and pulled it out of the hole, revealing an opening beneath.

They had brought a lantern with them to furnish illumination if they found the cave, and this was lighted and handed to Seymour, who, by right as original owner of the secret, was considered entitled to the first look at the pirates' treasure, if it existed in fact, as there seemed to be no longer any doubt but it did.

He was lowered into the hole by the rope and the other two boys saw him flash the light around and then disappear under the wall of rock.

Seymour had seen an opening in front of him, and advanced in that direction.

He didn't have to go far before he saw evidences of the truthfulness of Peter Marle's statement.

First there was a pile of metallic bars, very much tarnished, which, on scraping one of them with the blade of his knife, Seymour judged to be pure gold and silver.

They were tied together with leathern thongs, just as Marle had written.

There was a heap of ornaments, which had once been used in Spanish churches, and apart from the rest stood the large ostensorium, covered with precious stones.

There were more than fifty small leather bags, the clink of which assured the boy that their contents were undoubtedly coins, gold or silver, or both.

Then there was a large bag which Seymour untied and found to be full of jeweled rings and similar trinkets, some apparently of great value.

Lastly, there was the iron-studded chest, contents unknown.

Seymour was almost overcome by this display of wealth of which it had been previously arranged that he was to have half, Joe and Andy having declared that a quarter apiece would meet their wildest dreams.

Leaving the lantern in the underground cave he shinned up the rope and sent Joe down for a look, and when Morris came up, with his eyes sticking out like saucers, Andy went down to take a peep.

We will not dwell upon the delight of the three boys, we leave the reader to figure that out for himself.

When they grew rational again they lost no time transferring the contents of the cave to the boat.

They found it impossible to break open the chest in the confined space of the cave with the pick, the only effective implement they had at hand, so they tried to pull it out through the opening, but failed on account of its weight.

"What are we going to do?" asked Joe.

"We've got it right under the opening," replied Andy. "Let's hunt for a big stone and drop it on it."

This suggestion was carried out.

A big stone was found, rolled to the opening and pushed over the edge.

It smashed the box in.

The boys found that it contained a big tray of diamonds, rubies, pearls and other stones, from which the settings had been removed.

They were removed to the boat.

The bottom of the box was filled with a collection of old-fashioned pistols and cutlasses, which furnished the weight, and a large number of old Spanish coins.

"We won't bother with the weapons," said Seymour. "They're of no great value."

"But it won't do to leave those cutlasses there for that convict and his companions, if he has any, to get hold of."

"What will we do with them, then? They'll load the boat down."

"Throw them into the creek."

Joe passed enough up to lighten the box, which was then hauled up and dragged near the water, some of the coins spilling out.

The cutlasses and pistols were then cast into different parts of the creek and the broken box was left as an exhibit for Joe Bristol to ponder over when he returned to the scene.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STARTLING ENCOUNTER.

The boys rowed off down the creek with their boatful of treasure, in high spirits.

They had at last accomplished the object which brought them to Cocos Island, and they were tickled to death at their success.

As the boat turned into the bend of the stream where the flat rock stood out near the water's edge, Andy suddenly stopped rowing.

"Hold on, fellows!" he cried.

"What's the matter?" asked Seymour and Joe, in a breath.

"Do you know that diamond-studded crucifix we thought was so fine?"

"Sure."

"I laid it down on the ground beside me when I took up that ostensorium, as you call it, to look at, and blame me if I didn't forget all about it."

"Do you mean to say it isn't in the boat?" asked Seymour, both he and Joe bending over and peering at the pile of church ornaments at their feet.

"That's what I mean," replied Andy.

"You left it behind up there, then?"

"I did," answered Andy, in a chagrined tone. "I would not lose that for twice its value, for I took a shine to it and was going to ask you fellows to let it go in with my share."

"Well, we'll have to row back and get it, for it's evidently a valuable church ornament," said Seymour.

"What's the use of rowing back?" exclaimed Joe. "Let you and I run back for it. It's only a step through that brush."

"All right," agreed his chum. "Pull in near the rock, Andy. We'll be back in a couple of minutes."

As soon as the bow of the boat touched the shelving sand, Seymour and Joe leaped on shore and darted off toward the lane they had hacked through the underbrush.

In a moment they disappeared from Andy's sight.

One of the shovels they had used to dig with, and which they had abandoned, was sticking upright in the ground where they left it, and it guided them directly to the hole.

They expected to find the crucifix near it.

Without a single thought of danger, and as light-hearted as a couple of schoolboys bound on a vacation, they dashed across the open ground toward the hole.

Suddenly five dark-hued, almost naked savages sprang out from among the trees and brush near the rocky wall and confronted them.

The two boys were taken completely by surprise.

Two of the savages seized Joe by the arms, while the others threw Seymour to the ground and held him there in spite of the desperate efforts he made to free himself.

When Seymour had exhausted himself and lay still, breathing heavily, the natives pulled him to his feet and held him tightly.

One who appeared to be the leader jabbered to the others in an uncouth language, pointed to the prisoners and then held up three fingers.

He immediately went down to the edge of the creek and looked up and down, as if searching for something.

Seymour at once jumped to the conclusion that the savage was aware of Andy's presence in the vicinity, and was looking for him.

He was wondering how he could warn the young mate to save himself and the treasure from capture, when Joe, by a sudden wrench, got away from his captors and started

back by the way they had come, with the two fleet natives close upon his heels.

"Look out, Andy!" cried Joe, as he dashed into Blake's astonished view, just eluding the arm of one of the natives, stretched out to seize him.

Morris made for the water's edge with the chances against his reaching it, as the savages covered the open ground about twice as fast as he could.

After the first shock of surprise, Andy rose to the occasion.

He drew a revolver from the pocket of one of the jackets in the bottom of the boat, cocked and aiming it at the savage, who he saw was about to seize Joe, fired.

The native stumbled forward, with a guttural cry, and fell headlong on the sand.

The other savage tripped over the body of his companion and went floundering on the sand.

Thus Joe was enabled to reach the boat, and he sprang in.

"Where's Seymour?" asked Andy, excitedly.

"Taken prisoner by three other fellows like those two," replied Joe.

"We must save him!" exclaimed Andy, in vigorous accents.

"The safest way to accomplish it will be to row back up the creek to the cave," said Joe, as the second savage picked himself up, and with a startled look at the boat, another at his squirming companion, took to his heels and vanished into the underbrush the way he came.

"Grab your oars, then!" cried Andy. "I guess we haven't a moment to lose."

They turned the boat around and rowed upstream as if their lives depended on their exertions, but when they arrived at the bend, which gave them a view of the opening into the cave, the savages and Seymour, also, had disappeared.

"They've carried him off!" cried Joe, aghast.

"Maybe they're hiding in the brush, waiting for us to come ashore so they can pounce upon us," ventured Andy, doubtfully.

"We would be fools to give them the chance," replied Joe, reaching for his own jacket and drawing out his revolver.

"But we oughtn't to let them get away with Seymour."

"We can't be too cautious," replied Joe. "Those chaps came upon us before we had the least idea of their presence."

The two boys peered about the place, but there wasn't sight or sound of the savages.

They rowed a bit further up the stream without making any discovery.

"Well, I'm going ashore for that crucifix," said Andy, resolutely.

"It's awful risky," warned his companion.

"I'll have my revolver ready, and keep my eyes skinned for the rascals, while you keep your gun ready to open fire if they show themselves."

"Wait till I get out Seymour's revolver, too," said Joe.

As soon as he had it in his left hand, they pulled the

boat in, Andy stepped on shore and started, with due caution, for the hole.

He reached it and Joe saw him pick up the crucifix which was the cause of all the trouble, and then look around while he stood in a listening attitude.

Not a savage showed himself, and Andy got back safely to the boat with his prize.

"They've gone away, by the looks of things, and taken Seymour with them," said Andy, as he resumed his seat in the boat.

"Gee whiz! This is tough. How are we going to find and rescue Seymour?" asked Joe, with an anxious expression on his face.

"The best way I know of is for us to return to the brig with the treasure, and, after stowing it away below, go on a still hunt for our friend."

"And while we're gone that convict is likely to search the brig and get away with the stuff, for we may be gone some time," said Joe.

"Then, perhaps we'd better hide it some place outside the bay till after we have succeeded in saving Seymour. Bristol won't be able to reach it, then, and as he can't steal the brig we needn't fear him."

It was so decided, and Andy and Joe resumed their oars and pulled down the creek on their way back to Wafer Bay.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

In the meantime how fared it with Seymour?

A moment or two after Joe disappeared through the brush, with the two natives at his heels, the boy heard a pistol shot from the direction of the boat.

"That's Andy," thought Seymour. "I'm glad he's wide awake to the emergency. I hope he'll save Joe, at any rate."

In a couple of minutes one of the savages came dashing back, looking as scared as one of his nature can look.

As his companion did not follow, Seymour was satisfied the young mate had hit him with the pistol ball.

"Well, Joe is safe, at any rate; that's some satisfaction," breathed the boy, as he saw the savages jabbering, excitedly, together.

Suddenly the leader made a sign to the others and started through the brush.

Seymour felt himself forced to go along with the two who held him, and the creek was left behind, the party taking a course across the island toward Wafer Bay.

They pushed along through dense, tropical shrubbery and trees, occasionally passing over open spots thickly carpeted with verdure greener than Seymour had ever seen before.

They traveled rapidly, never pausing to rest, and Seymour was about done up when the party emerged from the trees upon the borders of Wafer Bay, which Seymour recognized even before he saw the brig resting at her anchorage half a mile away.

The savages walked down to the water's edge and set up a loud shout.

Seymour then saw a figure move aboard the brig, descend the side into a boat, which the boy knew did not belong to the vessel, and row toward them.

His heart jumped into his mouth, for he guessed that this person was Bristol.

What connection had he with these natives, who looked to be South Sea Islanders, and strangely out of place on Cocos Island?

How came they to be there, more than a thousand miles from their native haunts?

These were questions that puzzled the boy, let alone the greater mystery of Joe Bristol's presence on this island when he was supposed to be safely lodged in the State Prison at San Quentin, California.

Seymour's surmise was quite correct.

This man was Joe Bristol, and when he stepped on the beach he favored the boy with a grin of satisfaction.

It was succeeded by a look of disappointment and anger when he saw only one prisoner, and he opened up on the leader of the savages in their own language, which was not an astonishing circumstance, since, for a great many years, he had been a beachcomber in the South Pacific, and had naturally learned the dialect of the natives.

The savage whom he addressed made some explanation, but it did not satisfy Bristol, for he worked himself into a great rage, and finally drew a knife and made a pass at the native, cutting a gash in his arm.

The savages uttered a sudden cry at this, and the four, leaving Seymour to himself, jumped upon the convict.

He stabbed one of them to the heart, but that was as far as he got.

They had him down on the beach in a twinkling, the knife was torn from his grip and buried to the hilt in his breast.

He quivered a moment and then straightened out, a corpse.

Seymour had been taken so by surprise that not until his enemy had been disposed of did he think of escape.

Then he dashed for the boat, floating at the edge of the beach, leaped aboard and, seizing the oars, pulled for the brig as fast as he could.

The savages made no attempt to head him off, but after watching him for a moment, while the leader was binding up his wounded arm, the three picked up their dead comrade, threw him into the bay and walked off among the trees.

Seymour was delighted to find that the savages paid no further attention to him, and rowed leisurely toward the brig.

In spite of the curdling sensation of seeing a man stabbed to death, the boy was rather glad, on the whole, that the convict had been summarily put out of the way, for he felt that both himself and his companions, as well as the treasure, was not safe while the rascal lived and was in that vicinity.

Bristol's death removed a great obstacle from their path, and from the conduct of the three surviving natives Sey-

mour believed that he and his associates would not be further bothered by them.

After reaching the brig, Seymour went on board and investigated.

He found, as he suspected, that Bristol had searched the cabin pretty thoroughly and had gathered everything of value into the captain's cabin, which he had evidently made up his mind to use himself.

His plan, Seymour judged, was to capture the three boys, and then hunt for the treasure himself.

No doubt he intended to maroon them on the island, after he had found the pirate trove, putting off to sea in the brig, and with the help of his native allies work the craft to a South American port and then escape with his booty.

After resting himself, Seymour decided to pull around in the boat to Chatham Bay and hunt up his companions, who, he thought, might be figuring on searching for him, after concealing the boatload of treasure.

So he started out of the bay and rowed along the foot of the headland.

He had accomplished less than half of the distance when, happening to turn around, he saw a boat coming toward him in the distance.

"That's Andy and Joe, for a dollar, and they haven't seen me yet. I'll pull into this little cove and then give them the surprise of their lives."

He did so, and lay upon his oars till his two companions came gliding along within a cable's length.

Then he rowed out to meet them.

"Jumping Christopher!" cried Joe, dropping his oars. "If that isn't Seymour!"

"Why, how the dickens did you get here, and where did you pick up that boat?" asked Andy, in amazement.

Of course, explanations were in order, and the mystery of Seymour's unexpected appearance in that spot was soon a mystery no longer.

The others were glad to hear of Bristol's death.

"That's one scoundrel less in the world," said Andy. "We're well rid of him."

"Bet your life we are!" answered Joe.

The boys soon reached Wafer Bay and transferred the treasure to the deck of the brig.

After dinner they decided to box the stuff, using the empty grocery boxes in which canned and other goods had been stored.

The treasure filled six boxes.

"The next thing in order is to slip the anchor, make sail and return to 'Frisco," said Andy. "We have no further use for Cocos Island that I know of."

"Second the motion!" chirped Joe, with a happy grin.

"It is moved and seconded that we depart from this island at once and lay our course for the Golden Gate," said Seymour. "Those in favor of this will say aye."

"Aye. Aye!" roared Andy and Joe, simultaneously.

"It is so decided."

As they couldn't raise the anchor, they let the cable slip out through the hawse-hole, after they had made sail, and

an hour before dark the brig passed out of Wafer Bay into the broad Pacific and turned her nose N. E.

Two weeks later the brig San Jacinto was reported off "The Heads" at the Merchants' Exchange at about eleven in the morning.

She entered the Golden Gate and was duly boarded by the Customs officers, to whom the boys made a limited report, at the same time putting in a claim for salvage for brig and cargo, which was later allowed, and they received enough money to release the six boxes of treasure from bond.

Seymour also found himself richer by a thousand dollars—as that amount had been paid by the authorities to his mother for the information he had furnished which had led to the capture of Joe Bristol.

It appeared that Bristol escaped from the officers on the boat, which was carrying him back to the penitentiary, and he was supposed to have been drowned until the boys' story came to light.

Some months afterward it was learned he had taken refuge on the brig Sally Ann and made his appearance after she got well to sea.

When the vessel was some 200 miles to the west of Cocos Island he had stolen away from the vessel in a boat, and it was subsequently learned he had been picked up by a derelict, which craft, with the five South Sea natives aboard, had been blown to the eastward by a three days' storm.

Bristol, who was a tolerably fair sailor, had managed to work the craft to Cocos Island, where his villainous career ended, as has been described.

Seymour Atwood realized \$600,000 as his share of the Cocos Island treasure, while Joe Morris and Andy Blake receive \$300,000 each.

Andy eventually acquired a half interest in the brig Sally Ann, and at his father's death became sole owner and commander.

As for Seymour and Joe, they continued their studies, graduating with honor, after which they spent four years at a famous college in the Santa Clara valley.

To-day their most precious possession is a newspaper article printed many years ago in a big San Francisco daily and headed "A MADCAP SCHEME."

THE END.

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